BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: YONOICHI KITAGAWA, former boxing coach, machinist

Yonoichi Kitagawa, Japanese, was born in Kakaako, November 12, 1913. His parents came to Hawaii from Yamaguchi ken shortly after the turn of the century; his father was an akule fisherman.

Yonoichi attended Pohukaina Elementary, Washington Intermediate, and Japanese Language Schools. He was very active in sports in the late 1920's through the 1940's--football (Kakaako Sons and Atkinson teams), gymnastics, and amateur boxing. He was best known as a boxing coach and served as a community leader, working with young men and boys.

He held a variety of jobs as a sheet metal worker, a machinist, and is currently employed by the City & County Parks and Recreation Department.

TIME LINE

1913	birth: Kakaako
1928	played barefoot football
1932	started coaching boxing (until the 1950's)
1940	married

Tape No. 3-4-1-77 And Tape No. 3-14-1-77

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yonoichi Kitagawa (YK)

September 28, 1977

McCoy Pavilion, Honolulu

BY: Perry Nakayama (PN)

PN: This is an interview with Mr. Yonoichi Kitagawa on September 28, 1977, at McCoy Pavilion.

Mr. Kitagawa, could you tell me a little about your parents, where they came from?

YK: My parents came from Yamaguchi ken. And the year, the arrival date, I'm not too specific on it. I would say about 1902, 1903, somewhere around there.

PN: Why did they come to Hawaii?

YK: Well, you know, Japanese people, they have this--not only my father was a fisherman--seafaring nature. So they want to try and see what, I would say, good fortune is in Hawaii.

PN: So he came here as a fisherman?

YK: That's right.

PN: And then how about your mother?

YK: My mother came with him at the same time. I'm sure that....of course my older brother was born in Japan.

PN: They left him back there at first?

YK: That would be somewhere around 1907 that he came here.

PN: And when were you born?

YK: I was born in Honolulu, November 12, 1913. I figure that I was born one year earlier, but during those days, you know, the Japanese people, they don't go out of their confines. They stay right near certain perimeter, and reporting of birth, I'm sure was late. So it's not only

me but many of the people that were born during my time. The registration date of birth one year, some of them are two years later. So they go according to the registration date. I'm probably one more.

PN: So your father came here as a fisherman?

YK: Mhm.

PN: Is that the reason he settled in Kakaako?

YK: That's true, because fishing, I would say, was his main livelihood. And settling in Kakaako, being an ideal place because the waterfront is nearby.

PN: What kind of fisherman was he?

YK: Akule fisherman.

PN: Could you tell little bit about your early childhood? Like what kind of things you used to do when you were small?

YK: Well, because the advantage we had living near the ocean, lot of swimming activities. And having Atkinson Park. I would say, at that time, (this) was the largest ball field on the island of Oahu. So we having access to ball field and waterfront being nearby, lot of time we spend at the beach and baseball games, and other kind of sports.

PN: You mentioned you belong to a surfing club?

YK: Organize a surfing club. Back in 1936.

PN: What was the name of that?

YK: No specific name, but we call 'em the"Kakaako YMA"anyway, Young Men's Association. Because we had already formed the Kakaako YMA, and the boys that were training at that time use the Kakaako YMA mainly to box in the amateur boxing contests.

PN: This is the surfing club when you said you made your own boards?

YK: Yes. During the time, I would say about 1934, 1935, or maybe a few years ahead. Starting from around 1932, we used to purchase the lumber. Redwood, clear lumber to make surfboards. They were somewhere in the length of about 10 to 12 feet. And four inches to up to six-inch thickness. The finished product, each one pitch in their share of work. And finished product would weigh approximately about 100 pounds or little over. Hundred, 125 pounds. One or two of them would be hollowed out to make it lighter. And for better performance.

PN: How often you folks used to go surfing like that?

YK: Every weekend. During the summer, summer months, we would go practically everyday. Of course, at that time then, I was working, so I usually go on weekends. Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. But the boys that were attending school during the summer month, well, they were at a place called"Stone Wall." And they're there everyday. Everyday. And they sure get toasted up, you know.

PN: (Chuckles) The Stone Wall is right by the entrance to Kewalo Basin.

YK: That's right. I would say 100 feet toward Ewa side of the old incinerator.

PN: And how did you folks carry your boards down to the ocean?

YK: Well, when we started making surfboard at the start, well, we find that lugging the surfboard back and forth was too much work. Especially not while we were going to the surfing ground, but coming back after you spend most of your energy on the waves and so forth. Well, we find that after being hungry, that's too much of an ordeal to carry a board back. So we constructed a push-wagon to load the surfboard on, and we would pile the boards, sometimes six of 'em. And the latecomers would come and get the wagon and take it back and get the rest of the surfboards. And many cases where I would say the number of surfers that in our group had to wait out their chance. So we alternate using the boards.

And many times, of course, they'll queue up, stand in line. Who uses what board, what weight. Sometime a guy might be too light for the board that available at that time. So we wait until that small board comes in. So usually a smaller and lighter boys have a tendency of using the lighter board because it's easier to handle.

PN: At that time, were there many people surfing?

YK: Not at our place. That Stone Wall, I would say, was practically reserved for us. And lot of people outside, living in the Waikiki area or wherever, would spend most of their time at Waikiki. We would spend our time at Stone Wall. So we practically had that place, I would say, all to ourselves.

PN: What if some so-called outsiders, someone not from Kakaako district would be...

YK: That had never happened. Because I would say, it's sort of a place where you were walking on Ala Moana Boulevard--at that time it wasn't paved. It was a dirt road--you would have no open vision or visibility toward the ocean area. So most people who do surf bypass that area. So they didn't know that we had our special ground.

PN: Secret spot.

YK: And that area actually I would say, is known only to the people that was residing in Kakaako. And Waikiki being a better surfing ground, the rides are longer. Of course, the Stone Wall waves were much more stronger. But then people prefer a longer ride, so they go to Waikiki. In fact, many a time that when we do surf, we like to test the waves out in Waikiki. We paddle all the way from Stone Wall to the Waikiki surfing ground and back.

PN: (Laughs) That's a far paddle. Going back to this wagon, what was this wagon made of? Must have been pretty tough to carry...

YK: Well, we use the iron type of wheel. It's not rubberized. And, I would say, the approximate diameter would be about 14 inches across. And we put steel axle underneath and put a box on it, you know. I would say, not exactly a box. A small riser on each end. Four inches by one inch. And what we do is--it looks more like a platform rather than a box in, so that you can put in some other stuff. But the elevation of four inches. Pretty high till we change it. And 12-inch board when we have such thing as canned goods to lug to the surfing grounds.

PN: Oh, you used to put canned goods on top you guys' wagon too? You said you used to go spearing out here today.

YK: That was the best spearing ground at that time, bar no other places. That you have, I would say, right in front of Fort Armstrong, there was ground that was just a haven for fishes. Any kind of a fish, and those fish were really tasty, taste different. We take the maninis out at Stone Wall. Doesn't have the smell like the ones that smell elsewhere. Like, you know, you catch manini other areas, you have that strong seaweed smell. This seaweed smell out at Stone Wall was practically nil all that manini and palani.

PN: That's the two main fish you guys used to spear?

YK: And a lot of holeholes, lobsters.

PN: Lobster too?

YK: Lot of 'em. One of the best grounds for ulapapapa. That's the slipper lobster. Best ground.

PN: What about tako like that? Had lot of tako out here, too?

YK: Squid, I would say, you talk about Hauula, Punaluu, Kaaawa those days. But I don't think you could touch tako grounds like the way we had.

PN: You folks used to go out pulehu the fish right on the beach?

YK: Yes. Many time we pick seaweed and boil it. We would just par boil it, and pulehu the fish that we spear. Whatever intervals we had during lunch hour. That was our lunch. And you can't beat the pulehu. The best.

PN: What other things you folks--you said you like to go hiking.

YK: Yes. We spend a lot of time, too, on hiking. And take, for instance, there was a trail that goes past through Dole Park. And there is a pit there presently being used as a park. We go straight up the Dole Street and hike up on Punchbowl from there, past directly through the center of the present cemetery National Cemetery. And you have to go through Papakolea. Then we would be above Makiki. And from there, we make our own trail, and hit Tantalus. Many occasions where we come back before noon. Say, we start out 6 o'clock in the morning, and we're up there. By 11:30, we're back. And about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, we start out again. And follow the same trail, our trail, and same path. We go up the top, do a little ti leaf sliding and come back home. Reach home about 5:30, 6:00. So we used to make really fast time. Take us about hour and a half to get there. Coming back, we run down.

PN: (Laughs) That's pretty far.

YK: So coming down was no problem because we had the slope to our advantage.

PN: You said you played football like that?

YK: Yeah, football. We had the Atkinson football team. We had the 120 pound (Microphone problem)...and the Kakaako Sons also. We took the name Atkinson because there was a park there called Atkinson Park. As I mentioned, there was a park, was the largest ball park on Oahu.

PN: This was just makai side of Mother Waldron?

YK: Presently it's American Factors warehouse. Where were we now?

PN: Oh, Atkinson. You were talking about barefoot football.

YK: Yeah, and where the two teams playing in the same league. The Kakaako Son Midget, then the 120 pound team. The Kakaako Son Junior. There was a 135 pound team. And the 150 team that was the Kakaako Sons Senior. The Atkinson group was divided into the 120 and the 135. Two divisions.

PN: What team did you play for?

YK: I played for both. I played two years for the Kakaako Sons Midget team, the 120. And played for the Atkinson--after two years, played for the Atkinson. Five years, five consecutive years in which we took four consecutive championships, both in the 120 pound division and the 135 pound division. Our 120 pound team was very strong. Very, very strong. We played teams like Pawaa, Kalihi Valley team. They had this Senior Kalihi Valley team. But then the 120 pound team, the Kalihi we had never tackled that. But we were playing in the East Division, so we tackled Moiliili, Pawaa. Teams along that area. Waialae.

PN: What position did you play?

YK: I played end, left end on both the 120 pound team and the 135 pound team.

PN: Who was your coach at that time?

YK: Coach was Uichi Kanayama. He was then vice principal for Kalakaua Intermediate School.

PN: And this was what? All voluntary this time?

YK: Voluntary. All this time spending coaching baseball and football was all voluntary.

PN: So what kind of people used to play in that 120 weight division?

YK: Well, in the 120 pound weight division for the Kakaako Sons, well, there were Portuguese, Chinese, Hawaiian, Japanese. But in the Atkinson, they were all Japanese.

PN: All Japanese? Why was there a difference?

YK: Well, somehow, like any other places, I guess more so in Kakaako, Japanese have a community by itself. You go Palama, Palama have mixed races there, but then the Japanese camp had nothing but Japanese. So this is one of the reason why the Japanese actually stuck to Japanese. Although we go and we know all them because through school we had to intermingle with any nationality. But then, when you form teams like that, I guess, getting along was easier. And because--could round up the boys, because I would say, it's not a clique, but because of the camp. It's sort of like segregation due to living condition and by camps.

PN: Was there any rivalry between the Atkinson team and the Kakaako Sons?

YK: We did. We would really--in fact I had many fights. Not something that is major where it ends up with major injury, but fisticuffs. Fighting against the Portuguese and the Hawaiians. But when it come to where Kakaako district is concerned, what happens is if there's a fight among districts, Palama and Kakaako, you'll find that the Japanese in Kakaako, the Portuguese and Hawaiians would get together and represent the district, Kakaako district. And we make a pretty good army. Ready for action army, you know, in those days. So we can call it a standing army. We had different people with different ethnic background who really combine and come together. Palama is the same thing, you know. All districts were along the same line.

PN: Talking about fighting like that, you said when you were young you used to get into a lot of fist fights.

YK: Yes, you do. Let's take it back. It's more like a sport rather than because you hate the person you get into trouble. No. It's just a matter of challenge. Like in Japan, those days, they had feudal days where Musashi was the best swordsman at that time, and they want to challenge. Along that line. Well, today, you won't find that too much. But those days where you have more leisure time, follow that kind of a line, well, who's supreme. Many time supremacy, gaining supremacy through fisticuffs is one way. Of course everyone in Kakaako, they respect each other. But no matter where you go, there got to be a leader. So today, I would say, a lot of brains will make a guy a leader. But in those days, the guy that can beat the rest of 'em--or I would say the king would be someone that was pretty good using his dukes.

PN: Would you have called yourself a leader back then?

YK: Well, I would say that I had lot of fist fights. Many times with people twice my size. Never lost except, of course, if I got hit false, you know. This is where I'm too small, so I would not say I got badly beaten. But on the up and up, lot of win.

PN: What did your parents think of all this?

YK: Of course, especially the older people were very strict, more so in stealing. But fight, you know, this is one thing that I don't think any parents would--not condone, but I don't think they can control. So it happens. But as far as stealing or killing, along that line, you never find that. Fighting, everybody somewhere in Kakaako you'll find 'em fighting. Those things happening. And I'm sure Palama, Kalihi, was the same thing.

PN: You said this got you into trouble as far as schooling goes. How's that? Got kicked out of school? Was this because...you had to transfer schools was because of fighting?

YK: Well, not only that, too. Because absenteeism. Many time, you know, when you're more like a nature boy, you have a tendency of forgetting to learn. You prefer the wide open spaces. Get more time to surf, more time to spear fish. And these along the line comparing to, I would say, the sedentary sit in school. Chair and at your desk, that becomes tiresome. But then when you imagine one sitting there in school, imagine the waves are good. The ocean is calm. Today is the best day for diving.

PN: So you,say, played hooky quite a bit.

YK: And you know I was reprimanded many times. In fact I was whipped because of absenteeism and then making trouble at school. Not stealing, but fighting and so forth.

PN: They would spank you?

YK: With a yardstick.

PN: (Laughs) Was this one of the teachers Mother Waldron?

YK: No, this was I'm talking about Washington Intermediate. But Mother Waldron was very strict, but I would say she have a appearance of Winston Churchill. Sort of like an English bull. You know, face and all...

(Laughter)

YK: She, I would say, a facsimile of Winston Churchill, or for that matter, vice versa. I would say Winston Churchill looks like Mother Waldron. And she played a role by her looks, but deep down in her, she's a very, very kind person. Very kind. But she's one person that call a spade a spade. And no ifs and buts about it. When you bring a problem to her, she'll find time to iron it out with you. Very, very honest lady.

PN: She was at Pohukaina?

YK: She was teaching at Pohukaina School, elementary. And after school, while waiting for her daughter to pick her up, she would be at the playground. She would be sitting on the old rocking chair, and knitting, and casting a side glance with one eye, you know. See how the boys are playing in the playground, this and that. Making sure that everything is okay.

PN: I was just curious as to what your parents' reaction to you having to transfer from Pohukaina to....

YK: To Washington?

PN: To Washington?

YK: Well, actually, because this is the first time where intermediate school came up. Prior to that, it was elementary school was to the eighth grade. And since junior high came up, it was seven to nine. Prior to that, elementary school was first grade to eighth grade. So from seventh grade on, you got to go to a junior high school. So my parents' reaction was, "That's good." What we do is we walk all the way from Kakaako to Washington Intermediate School.

PN: You had to transfer because of your absentees and....

YK: No, no. Because I went into junior high school. In other words, from seventh grade you started junior high school.

PN: You said that you turned to boxing as getting away from fist fights, I guess.

YK: Yes. Later on, as a guy matures, you know, you gradually learn a lot of things. That being possessing a more mature mind, you go along with if there's going to be a fist fight, why not do it legally, and have the same kind of a fist fight, and it's better. So this is how we went about taking up boxing. This is the very start of boxing for my club as Kakaako YMA. While I was training boxers, I would say, in 1934. One or two guys, 1932. But from 1934 on, really concentrated on it. And what happened, off weekends surfing. Then 1936, we join the AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] as a club.

PN: For you yourself, when did you become a boxer rather than....

YK: Well, actual boxing, well, there was a Kewalo Club out in Ilaniwai. And during these early days there were good boys like Thunderbolt Haines. He comes from Palama. And a Filipino guy named "Young Harry" Wills. They were all good fighters. Then boxing was not legalized. That was legalized in 1929 when the late Donovan Flint went up to Congress and had boxing legalized in Hawaii. But prior to that, 1926, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928 were called the "bootleg" days. Boxing was held in places like Liberty Dance Hall, Liliha Street. That area was surrounded by sugar cane. And also boxing was held in Kewalo Club. Kewalo Club was made by--the walls were made by 1 by 12. You know, the rough lumber. And as the season wears the lumber down, there was space in between the lumber. About one inch spaces. Well, we call it crack, you know.

(PN Laughs)

YK: Of course, it was well ventilated. Not depending upon the crack, but the roof were very simple. Was corrugated roof. And there was a two feet opening from the wall to the eave of the roof. So there was ample ventilation. And it was about 125 feet long by 50. So it was a sizeable gym and it was oh, quite a bit of crowd.

PN: Who built the ring?

YK: The ring, I really don't know who built it. But it was elevated ring about two feet from the ground. Very sturdy. Of course the construction not as good as the one you have today. But it was pretty good.

PN: You said boxing was illegal. What was people's reaction to this? I mean they knew boxing was going on, yet it was...

YK: Well, it was sort of like a hush-hush. And people that are in the boxing circle, people that likes to gamble, it would be a similar thing that is what happening to chicken fight those days and today. They would gather around--a certain segment of people who love gambling and would like to see some sort of a bloodshed or some body contact sport will gather. So the majority of the crowd would be comprised of Filipinos. They do lot of side betting. And the fighter themselves were getting paid about $10, $15.

PN: A fight?

YK: A fight.

PN: What about the rest of the community? What was their reaction to this?

YK: They wouldn't know. If the community knows, or if it was publicized, then you'll get the cops on you. Police would be there. So because being illegal, well, they used to raid, you know. Like they did on the Mainland during the John L. Sullivan days. They used to fight on the barge. Well, I would say it's the same thing. So it's more like a hush-hush. And word gets around, went through the grapevine. Then get substantial people attending.

PN: How many people would you say would to go one of these "bootleg" sports?

YK: "Bootleg" would draw about 300 to 400 people.

PN: Oh Yeah? Wow.

YK: So I'm sure the actual admission fee must have been 50 cents or $1. Around that area. 'Cause you get 300 people, the people promoting the show make about $300. And you don't file in tax, you know. So that profit will be good for the promoter.

PN: Was there much controversy at that time, when they were trying to pass that law? That 1929...

YK: No, it was no big thing. It was very silent. What happened was Donovan Flint's wife was also school teacher at Washington Intermediate. There was a student there named Henry Kudo. And he was pretty good. Really good. And because of his interest in this boy as a boxer, Donovan Flint made a treck to Washington to have the thing legalized. I think Henry Kudo was about, at that time, 14 years old.

PN: Fighting at 14?

YK: Yes.

PN: Was that unusual in boxing?

YK: No. Many of the contestants, like we take people like "Patsy" Fukuda, they were young boys yet. And I would say average age will be 15, 16, 18 to 20. We had the "Big Bolo" who was a terrific fighter. But then when boxing was legalized, he was wash up. We had "Cyclone" Malicio. He fought in the "bootleg" days. And I would say after watching him during many sparring session and "bootleg" fights, I would say he was one of the greatest flyweight here. But then, what happen is it wasn't--boxing those days didn't have any commissioners. I'm sure there were lot of violations. Such as stuffing additional things in the glove or

things like that, but no one prove it. Didn't make any headlines. No story. Nobody knows about things like that. Because it wasn't publicized. But if it was publicized, you'll find a very, very small article in the sport section where ordinary people would just skip it, just ignore it. No blazing headline covering boxing.

PN: Did the crowd that attended boxing change after it was legalized?

YK: Yes. Then they went out to stadium, the Honolulu Stadium. Then you have a bigger crowd you know.

PN: Then it wouldn't be all just betters and gamblers there?

YK: Then they'd set rules and regulations, the Territorial Boxing Commission. Eddie Hoch (J. E. Hoch) was the then chairman. So it had come along quite a long ways. The rules have been amended, and made safer and safer.

PN: Would you say that this commission sort of eliminated this kind of padding of the gloves?

YK: Yeah, I would say, actually, when we talk about eliminating padding, there's a padding that has been eliminated. It's the other way around. There are cases I know that the padding at the knuckles were removed by razor edge from the inside.

PN: That would give them more punching power?

YK: I would say be better. Outward appearance is hard to say, because the guy's hand wore tape, bandage, so as far as a mound there, it's hard to tell, because there won't be a mound, because your hands are taped. If you examine the gloves closely, then you will feel the knuckles. Any many times during the "bootleg" days, the hands were taped with bicycle tape. So you overlap that about three or four times around the fist, it would be just as hard as plaster of Paris or concrete. And you having about eight or nine layers of 'em, if you punch a wall, you'll make a hole through today's panel.

PN: (Laughs) During some of these fights I read in the newspaper that they had orchestras there and then some other kind of entertainment.

YK: Well, I would say the Filipino people would bring in their orchestra when a well-known Filipino fights. And the Puerto Ricans would bring their band when a Puerto Rican fights, or headlining the show. So like, when Chico Rosa used to fight, and couple of shows for Frankie Fernandez, both being Puerto Rican. You know, they bring the Puerto Rican band. So it was quite lively. This is not "bootleg" days. This was later when boxing was legalized already.

PN: You said you didn't turn pro?

YK: Yeah. About one week prior to the fight, I had a right arm injury. 'Cause I got caught with a drill press, you know. And it wasn't anything serious, but twist drill, so it twisted my clothing, my sleeve. It wrapped it right around under my armpit. So it leaved a nasty bruise there. Muscle, you know, was involved, so I didn't fight. The match-maker for that show was Kazu Yoshioka who I would say a great fighter. But he was matchmaking for Eddie Marino. Eddie Marino was then the promoter. He was a Filipino promoter. Very, very likeable guy.

PN: This was the boxer, Dado Marino?

YK: No, that's not Dado Marino. That was different.

PN: You said there was another reason why your parents didn't want you to go into boxing.

YK: Yes, because I had two brothers that were above me. One was two years older than me, and the other one was about eight years older than I am. And they both passed away. The older one died when he got hit with the baseball bat. Brain injury. The one that was above me as two years older than I was, he died from injury to the kidney through a basket-ball game. His teammate were passing--his opponent passing the ball down the court. He went out to block it. So when the ball was swung, caught him on the kidneys. So before the ball get out of hand, it hit him on the kidney. So he died from kidney ailment. And because of that fact, sport-related injury, then death to both of my brothers, my parents really frowned upon. So I hid. I used to train, but I hide my gears, you know. So she wouldn't know.

PN: Where did you train?

YK: I used to train at Kewalo Club.

PN: You said you had no coaching at all?

YK: No. Because I was a loner. And Frank Sylvester used to handle that. Remember me telling you about this guy but couldn't remember his name? Well, the guy's name Frank Sylvester. So he used to let me train at one end. And at that time there were few guys--of course, I knew, but being a little younger than those boxers, I used to stay in the corner. More to my side, and to myself.

PN: Then you took over this Kewalo Club?

YK: I think it was 1934. At that time, boxing was at its heights.

PN: What happened to this guy Sylvester who used to run?

YK: Frank Sylvester gave up. And that place was later idle, so I made agreement with him that I'll pay the light bill and the water bill if I could bring my boys in there. And he agree. So I use that place for

about a year. And then was sold to Union Supply where they manufacture the overalls. And Union Supply used that for warehouse. Then I went to the City and County Garage. From there, City and County Garage had a recreation hall. And the superintendent of the garage was Cummins. What's his first name now? I forget 'em.

PN: Rap Lee?

YK: Rap Lee Cummins. That's right. Rap Lee is related to the Washington Junior High School property owner, J. A. Cummins.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

PN: You began coaching at what year?

YK: 1934.

PN: When you took over the...

YK: Kewalo Club.

PN: You were a fighter before that right?

YK: 1932 is where I began when I had one or two guys, you know. Training in back of where I was living. And then went to Kewalo Club, this is where I formed the nucleus, I would say. Had about 10 boys at that time.

PN: How did you get into coaching? You're a boxer.

YK: Because my mother didn't want me to fight. So what I wanted to do was transfer my knowledge, and teach what I know, and see how my teaching will be. I would say, in one sense, it would duplicate or be some sort of facsimile of my style, what I would have done if I were really to fight or box. So I transferred this knowledge that I had, and instill that in the boys. So we had a unique Kakaako style. And it was noticed by the public. Even today, when they talk about Kakaako style, you know.

PN: That's your style?

YK: Yeah.

PN: How would you characterize your style?

YK: Well, I would say it's keeping the hands high. Especially the left hand. Today, it's adopted nationally, international Olympic rules. I would say all the nations that participates in Olympic is using that style today.

PN: Not peek-a-boo style?

YK: No. Not peek-a-boo style. Peek-a-boo style, I would say, is the normal method. 'Cause you would use both gloves on both cheeks.

PN: Yours would be more extended?

YK: Right. So I would say the same height. Would be the same height. Now, keeping the hands high would expose your abdomen. See, this is the consensus of most people. But this is where you do a slight crouch. Then the elbow would drop. When the elbow drop, it covers your belly area. So upright stance, I would say I had several boys that really applied the upright stance. But my primary reason is to keep the hands up high to make sure that you won't get tagged with the right hand. We take, for instance, that if you were shooting at the bulls-eye, be it with arrow or bullet, whichever one. If you have an obstruction in front of the bulls-eye, you'll never make your bulls-eye. So my opinion was that if you put your hands in front, then the result would be the same. The guy has to go around. When he goes around, the human body is so constructed that both arms are at the extreme end of the shoulder. So if you raise it up, that means the person got to come around. Now anytime when you have to come around, this is what we call a hook. A hook, whenever you hook your hand or when you crook your hand, you shortening the distance. In other words, the distance would be shortened.

PN: To hit the other person?

YK: Right. And throwing a straight blow will be more effective in hitting the target, and also lengthening your punch.

PN: What would you say was the predominant style prior to the early 1920's, like that? Was that the stand-up John Sullivan style?

YK: We take for instance, like physics. We take physics. Now we know that the center of gravity on the human body would be just about your navel. Center of gravity. The more you lean forward, this is where you would take, I would say, more stress. Because your end would be--the fulcrum would be just at your waistline. Your other end would be so-called leverage, eh. Gravitational force would extend the greatest at--I would say gravity would pull down on your head whenever you bow down. And then the result of that pressure, gravitational pressure would come to your waist. So therefore, you be expending more energy to keep your body active. You be using surplus energy that is needed so much for your contest. In other words, you be expending less energy.

PN: When you crouch down?

YK: When you stand up. Right. So if you were a spectator and you seen maybe baseball games or you went to a cockfight or whatever, you don't bend over and watch a Pop Warner football game from the sidelines. You look like a fool, with your hands dangling. You got to support your weight by having both hands placed on your knee. But that's only temporary. Even then you'll get tired. So what happens, you have a chance of straighten out. For straighten out is the most comfortable position. And then now your gravitational force would be direct from your head to your feet, soles of your feet. And you'll be distributed in a straight line.

PN: So your style would be just a slight crouch?

YK: Slight. Slight crouch is to cover up for the space that would be open on the upright stance. And that, I've proven that. Now when I went to Radford High School, I have the record with me. And students...that was the fight, George Foreman with Muhammad Ali at Zaire. And the consensus of the children, students at that school--was an English class, 'cause they wanted to find out probably my grammatical errors or whatever, make corrections or something along that line. So Bobby Lee was the first speaker. He left. He had half an hour. I had hour and a half of continuous talking, extemporaneous. And the subject was picked by them. So this why I was called in. So at that time, I maintained that Muhammad Ali will dump George Foreman out. So they all say, "Whoa, I don't agree." Because they figure George Foreman was then champion. And then most of his fight were thriller, where he captures the crowd fancy in regards to boxing. So what happened, even the students read paper, they figure that Ali style, because of his style and because of Foreman's punching power, Ali wouldn't last seven rounds. But I made a statement at that time that it'll be the other way around. They ask me why. And I explained this very same thing that as the round progresses, you'll find one person, especially George Foreman. He had to fight Muhammad Ali, he had to fight gravitational force. And he was not in too good a shape. So he have three opponents, where Ali had only George Foreman to fight. And sure like the way I said, it turned out that way. And he ran out of gas, because he'll be fighting like this throughout. Chase, chase. Then take a lot of beating right along the waistline. So what I have taught my boys in the early part of, I would say, 1932, 1934, when I first started, and throughout my coaching career, what I have preached is exactly what is being adopted internationally. Of course, who am I? Nobody knows. I'm only known...

PN: So you way ahead of your time?

YK: Yes, and many of the thing that I'm working on now, too. On my clinics I stress heavily on basics in physics. Use those basics, along gravitational force. Well, we take five basics and all. Atom physics, electricity, mechanics, and along that line. And we find that very,

very helpful to the coach that are coaching the kids now. Because we have six gyms that are active. These are the things that are transferred to the City and County instructors.

PN: Going back to your training like that, you said that when the Union Supply took over the Kewalo Club, you folks had to move out to....

YK: Nothing to be moved, so we just move our body up to City and County, and Rap Lee Cummins was kind enough to lend us a place. So we used to go there immediately after--the working crew comes in after that.

PN: So you trained your boys at the City Garage where it is now? That place? What about the ring like that?

YK: We had no ring.

PN: So training is all punching bag and things like that?

YK: Right.

PN: Where else did you folks train?

YK: Then we went to Konpira. That's a church, a shrine built for fishermen. Good luck, so that they'll catch more fish. The name of the place was, they call it Konpira-san in Japanese, you know. We erected a ring over there. I had boys come from Ewa. In fact, I had two boys that came from Ewa. And the rest were from my neighborhood.

PN: These boys would come to you? How would you...

YK: Yeah, they usually in our group. Because I have this surfing club, and they one of the boys.

PN: At this time, you said you were working at the...

YK: Shipyard.

PN: Inter-Island Shipyard. So after work you would do all the training?

YK: Right. And then after the Konpira-san place, we went to the Japanese school.

PN: What Japanese school was this?

YK: I would say Kakaako Alapai Japanese School, it was called. And it's a stone throw from where I live, where my former training place was at Konpira. Stone throw. It's presently where there's a radio station over there. On Ward Avenue, Ewa side of Ward Avenue. Blairs is over there.

PN: Oh, I know where Blair's is. Right across from GEM's.

YK: That's Halekauwila comes out to Ward. I would say it's a very crooked road, but it's still called Halekauwila. And it goes all the way down to Department of Transportation. Passes right in the back of it, below Queen Street.

PN: So that was your third training site?

YK: Right. And this is where I stayed long. Throughout the war years, I would say this is where we used to use. And we used to entertain the people, the soldiers, you know, Schofield Barracks. The army truck used to pick us up and it was blackout. And they come with a slitted headlights and pick us up, take us down to Schofield, bring us back to entertain servicemen that was ready to go overseas.

PN: Didn't the servicemen have their own boxing clubs?

YK: No. Because they were engaged at that time, they suspended it temporarily. Latter part of the war, yes. After it cooled down quite a bit. At the onset of the war, everything was helter-skelter. You know, things were all mixed up. But then the need for entertainment for servicemen was so great. For that matter, the civilians that were working for government project, you know, they were tied down, frozen to the job. So entertainment for this kind of a people was so great that the army sent over trucks to pick us up and we hold boxing shows among various club. Like the CYO, Palama, Kalihi. So it's the same people that were boxing at the Civic Auditorium were boxing at Schofield Barracks or Conroy Bowl.

PN: You had amateurs?

YK: Amateurs.

PN: You said you joined the AAU in 1936.

YK: Well, coming back to latter part of the war years, this is where--of course, there was some kind of a feeling where there was some racial overtones, you know. So the "A" and "B" section, they were separated. The "B" division boys were comprised of Japanese boxers who will box with only Japanese. "A" division will fight other nationalities. They can box inter-racially.

PN: This was in the AAU?

YK: AAU, that's right. At that time, we were taking precautionary measures so that the Japanese would not box other nationality. Because actually, it's a fisticuff. Let's face it. So the crowd might get out of hand, and the result would be riot. So for preventive measure, they temporarily suspended Japanese boys boxing other nationality. But then prior to the end of the war, they were boxing already.

PN: Different nationality?

YK: They try it and they find that no problem. Hawaii no problem.

PN: Yeah, I read that newspaper article where the military called in the promoters of the fight. Yasu Yasutake and this "Whitey" Robins, and they said you supposed to suspend any fights between Japanese and some other nationality.

YK: But Yasutake those days, they were professional already.

PN: The military clamped down on that? What was the reaction to the people in the fight circle?

YK: I would say didn't offend anyone. And whatever rule that was set, the general public accepted it. And the clubs also. The boxing clubs also accept it.

PN: 'Cause I was reading that paper and I was wondering what people thought about that, because just like you were being denied to watch two good fighters get together. So they separated the amateurs into "A" and "B" category?

YK: Right.

PN: And the pros were not allowed to fight?

YK: Later on, yes. But they were allowed.

PN Oh, theirs was later on, this restriction.

YK: And this is when Leo Leavitt came in, see. During the prime years where the general public were dying for any form of entertainment. Any form of entertainment. I would say if you had roller derby, they would have really packed it. Any form.

PN: Where would these people get money to sponsor or back the boxers?

YK: Yeah. This is the hard part. This is where we really struggle. And it comes out from the coach's pocket.

PN: You talking about amateurs?

YK: Yeah, amateurs. Whether it's amateur or pro, a pro gets paid, you know. But the amateur kids no get paid. So what happened was later on they adopted, the AAU made a ruling that according to participation basis. Let's say, regardless of how many time the same boy fought in various smokers, anytime he performs, he would be classified as participated one, participated two. So they would give a percentage of what the gross receipts were at the end of the year to each club so that they'll have money to buy equipment for the following year, following season.

PN: So some of your money, I guess, in the early years, was used to buy equipment. And you spent some of your money to....

YK: I would say a lot of my money. I would say, people actually couldn't last because the need for money to buy sport equipment. So people that wanted to get in don't know where to start, where to start from. First, is location, then training places such as warehouse. Who's going to lend a very important warehouse or a warehouse that can bring good income to them? Lend it out to a boxing club that can't even pay or could just pay a small amount.

PN: So the Japanese school that you were using, they donated that space?

YK: Well, because of the war too, later on. I went into the war years, too, you know, with the Japanese school. So Japanese school was suspended at that time. Shut down. Close it down.

PN: So you didn't have to pay rent?

YK: Fujisake took the place over and they sold their supplies. You know, like miso and all that. They were kind enough to lend us two rooms which was just enough for my boxing club. And that's where the hardship came in. Because cannot find warehouses that are empty. And if you do get one, it's going to cost you $300, $400, you know, to have a sizeable place. So what happens? To start off with, it cost money to buy equipments, and renting a place, pay the water bill, light bill. It was practically impossible. So only the crazy ones, like myself, Timo Phillips, Sad Sam who actually have boxing in their blood survive.

PN: How did you also support the boys? You sort of adopted them into, you took them into your house, fed them...

YK: Well, you know, don't have to be the boxers. Some of the guys that I knew, they have hard time. What we do is put 'em over at my house.

PN: You and your wife? Was she working also?

YK: No. My father was a fisherman. And he had itch, too, some kind of a skin disease. I wouldn't say a disease, but it's one form, anyway. Everytime he go out there, salt air, the salt spray wasn't good for him. So he'll break out in rash. So most of the time he stays home. So actually, sustenance of boxing club actually came from my pocket. Till the time that the AAU gave us preparation money for the following season according to participation basis.

PN: You know what year this sustenance came about? When did the AAU pass this rule that you could...

YK: That was during the war years.

PN: Can I ask you something about your training? How did you go about training your boxers? Running?

YK: Yes, this is one thing that got to be very careful on, you know. First is to identify the build of the boy. Today, of course, we have names. Such as terminology that I teach my instructors. Call them ectomorphic, endomorphic, mesomorphic. The body structure type. Ectomorphic would be the lean type. The endomorphic would be the flabby, round, roly-poly type. And the mesomorphic would be the gangling type with large frame. Those things are given. But we use the same system, but the names, didn't know any kind of a names to apply. But a coach got to be seasoned enough to identify the person. Then from watching the person build and all that, you already identify him and categorize him and weigh him. When you weigh him, you know what weight he's going to fight. This one of the most important thing when a guy start training. Otherwise, you'll be cutting a guy that's ectomorphic type who's very lean, and he has the height, and he weighs 118 pound, so he haven't got much to lose. But then the coach feels--even today, it happens today. Not in my instructors but outside coaches. The kid weighs 118. Because he has the height, he will be bigger than the other guy if he cut 'em down to 112, and fight in that division. Now his built is lean. Now you going to make 'em leaner, you going to dig into his muscle fiber. When you dig into muscle fiber, what happens is he'll be weak, and he loses his punch, he slows down. And you'll stunt him, you know. These are the things. So identifying, categorizing is very, very important.

And then next, after you start training him, got to go proper diet. Usually, the boxers like track people, or marathon runners, you deal a lot of protein. Without protein, if your intake of protein is lessened, your muscle fiber will break down faster. What protein does is build your muscle fiber. In other words, amino acids. The derivative is amino acids.

PN: What else did you do? You let them run? How else would you train?

YK: Many coaches, running is very important. Not only forward. Forward is what any normal human being would do. Such as marathon runners or people that do a lot of running, jogging. They run forward. But how many people run backwards? They don't. But in a boxing contest, and a marathon running, it's two different things to compare. Marathon running, you don't have the pressure, you don't have to watch for blows, you don't take body punishment. Butwith boxing, you do that. And many time during the process of sparring or in contest, you had to back out. If your opponent is stronger than you are, he's going to do a lot of pushing and being very aggressive you got to do a lot of backing up. This is the time, the first time a boxer finds out that he did a lot of running backwards, but because he had never done that in normal training, the muscle will tire fast, rapidly. Very, very rapidly. But if a coach is smart, what he will do is let the boy run forward, turn around and run backwards so that the muscle in the calf be conditioned to withstand forward motion and backward motion.

PN: You said you sparred with these boys, too? You would go into the ring with them? You would spar in the ring with them?

YK: Yes. It's hard to believe. When we take a kid boxing, three rounds of two minutes each, the third round, you find them practically petered out. And yet, the coach can say that he boxed 40 rounds, you know, or 30 rounds. You get 10 boys that in your gymnasium, you spar with 10 of them, three rounds a piece, that's 30 rounds. And amazingly, because you want to do it without a moment's hesitation or without resting, because the boys are waiting. You got to continue.

PN: You would spar with each one?

YK: Right. And have one minute rest. Then to take on the next opponent, it'll be right away. After he's finished with the third round, new sparring partner will come in. And you give him the work out, and you show him where the points are right. 'Cause many times when you instruct that person, that boxer there is learning from you. Wants proof, and you going to prove it. So by going, engaging with him in a regular sparring session, you prove what you are saying. And he has some form of pet roll, some kind of a favorite that he didn't tell you. And he goes home and he practice by himself. Which is wrong, of course, 'cause he's not being supervised properly. But then he thinks he's doing it right, so he's trying out. Next day he comes to a gym and he going to try it out on you. So these are the kind of things that he would find out that he was wrong. And you show him. Anytime you teach any moves in boxing, you got to prove it. Not just say that this is the way you do it. If you say, "You got to keep your left hand high for a reason," you got to prove it. And during a time when a guy take offensive, you got to show him how to throw a blow so that he would be a small target while taking advantage over offensive movements. You got to be able to get the fullest protection. This is why I had a respect for John Wooden who was the UCLA coach in basketball. Now during a free throw, notice that his players have their hands extended underneath the basket on a one-on-one occasion. So they already don't have to bring their hands from down up to get the ball on the rebound. The hands are up there already. This is a split second speed. In boxing, no difference. We had applied this many years. So this is why your hands got to be there on offensive movement, too, not only defense. Defensive movement, another thing. Offensive another thing. But in either case, your hands got to be at the precise location. Otherwise you be open.

PN: Did you go out and recruit boxers?

YK: No, they come to me. Because I wouldn't have time to go out looking for them. Usually they sought me out. They come around. And many of them are so shy. They couldn't approach me. Naturally, they are green kids compared to the ones that are already champion that is training in the gymnasium. You would have several champion training one area,

you're a green kid. He's holding back because he might be a poor performer the first time out, and feel bad, not cut out for boxing. These are the things that enter a new boy's mind. So we know that. As much as possible, we try to ease them. But when you get a thing you born with already, it's hard to sit down and talk with a new boy. But you be surprised how many of them come out directly opposite to their kind of personality. They aggressive, and they made their mind up that they want to learn. Come directly up to you, which make it far easier for me than the shy ones.

PN: Did you have any problem kids that may have been trouble with the law or something like that, they send them to you to shape them up?

YK: You mean whether kids that were training had trouble with the law?

PN: Well, even before that, they may just send them to you.

YK: Guys that are boxing? No, no, no. See, found out one thing the early years, 1932, 1934. That when a boy trains, he will be under strict regimen, let's say. And normally, he would go to sleep 10:30, 11:00, after studies you know. After training boxing, studying, then go to sleep. For a guy who's a late sleeper, that sleeps about 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock like that, when he start training, the next day he find out that staying up 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock is too physically demanding. He needs more rest. So what happen? He forms a habit of going to sleep early, and throughout his boxing career, this guy will retain and maintain that kind of a regimentation. And he goes to sleep earlier than what ordinary people would do. And this keeps him out of trouble. What happens, he will get a busy schedule. And if he's a working man, he goes to work and then he comes to the gym. He trains. And then wha happens is that he eats and then sleep. And when they do that, no chance to get into trouble. So what happens? If he's a guy that not working, he has all the time on his hands, he gets to follow the same pattern, too. 'Cause he finds that if he indulge in alcohol and along the line, if he is a heavy smoker, what happens is he get short-winded in either case.

PN: Was there any boys that came to you that was on the verge of going astray?

YK: I would say most of them were like that. Course some are exceptionally good boys. Really good boys. No need no correction. Always come from good family, and no need watch over. But many--I would say a lot of them were "bad eggs," you know. That's what I call them. But they change.

PN: Most of 'em changed?

YK: Yeah. I would say all. All of 'em. All. The better fighter they become, the greater they become, more popular, what happens is they

tone down, and you'll find all good boys like even Stan Harrington. He's a fighter. Very quiet. Frankie Fernandez is the same thing. Dado Marino is the same thing. In the case of my boys, you take Yoshi Miyamura or Charlie Kauhane. They don't talk about boxers because they been through boxing. Day in, day out. And that's what go through their mind. So what happened is boxing, they won't discuss it. So you take a good karate man, you know. He takes karate and he has this day in, day out, and dreams about 'em. So when he have free time, don't want to mention karate. You talk to him karate, he walk away. Same thing with boxing. A person, in one sense you can call him, become humble to the public's view. But he's not humble. He's sick and tired of talking about it. Or even somebody mention it.

PN: What would you say why these "bad eggs" would come to you? Why would they turn to boxing?

YK: Well, first of all, those bad ones already know that they like to challenge, either law enforcement. They want to put a challenge through excitement. When the cops chasing, beat the cop around the corner. That's some feat for him. You know, that he's faster than the cop. Before that's what happened in Kakaako. They always chase the kids, but never can catch 'em. So this is one kind of form of an excitement, I would say. So people that come to you, so-called"bad egg,"along trouble-making line, you know, they want to show what they got in fisticuffs or whatever. So they think they can master it. So they find out well, that it is not that easy. It's not that easy. So there are certain rules that they got to abide by, so they change gradually. Gradually change. And you look at the same boy one year later, he's the same boy, but notice that his actions have completely turned around.

PN: For the better.

YK: Completely turned around. And he know what being good means. He know how to take care his body. The drinking itself, beer may not be harmful, but maybe he pick up weight. But drinking one, two, leads to two case beer. In order to finish two case beer, it takes you to early morning hours. The early morning hours. Late hours, you see. Long hours is harmful. This is harmful.

PN: What happened to most of the boys you coached? Where did they go to? Did they get any jobs because of boxing?

YK: Not through boxing, but because they establish themselves good in sport or whatever, come bonafide citizen. They law abiding. They go school, they study hard. And each one, every one is a success. This is what make me feel good. I feel proud of 'em. Every one. Not one bad.

PN: Was there any injuries? I read in a newspaper article one amateur died in the ring.

YK: I would say there were several cases. But usually they have a case history. One died in 1966 in Hilo. There was one called Nakamura or something that died boxing for McCully AC. These cases, if you really study them, which even a doctor cannot find at the time of examination, would be when a child was small, when a boxer was small, he got into an automobile accident or fell off the bike, related to head injury. Usually, there's some kind of a injury when he was small. Of course, like you take Ben Parret, died when he was knocked out by Emile Griffith. Well, prior to that Benny Parret was knocked out. And not too long after that was that Emile Griffith bout. Therefore, he had injury that was there. Prior injury. Yeah. Recurrence.

PN: Would you say that boxing was really popular back in the 1930's and 1940's?

YK: I would say comparing to....I would say it was number two sport as far as spectator sport.

PN: What was the number one sport?

YK: Number one is football.

PN: The barefoot football.

YK: Yeah. Used to outdraw any other sport except football.

PN: Talking about boxing?

YK: Mhm.

PN: Why would you say that boxing is sort of declining over the years?

YK: Well, what happens is when you don't have what we call farm leagues. They never have no gymnasium. So when you don't have gymnasium, we don't have clubs, where are they going to train there? No training facilities. So it dies out. So when you get the amateur clubs form here and there, what the City is doing now. Locating gymnasium at places like Kaneohe, Kalakaua, Palolo, Kalihi Valley. You get more clubs forming. So this is the trend right now. It's coming back. So more clubs means more material. So then you'll have Kalihi Valley versus Palolo. Palolo versus Kaneohe. So each community back their athletes. So this is what create interest. What happen means more spectators. And the old days, this is why they were drawing. You find people from Kalihi, boxers that was coming out from Kalihi would have Kalihi community support. Kakaako will have theirs. So you get eight districts like that, you'll pack a auditorium. Imagine amateur shows, championship fight, had to go outdoors. Out at stadium, because could not hold that crowd out at the Civic.

PN: Amateur boxing does not bring any income like that. As a coach, how come you didn't turn to coaching pro boxers?

YK: Well, my main objective was to make them a good citizen. And professional, you got to be exceptionally good. You got to have qualities such as ability to take punishment. You got to get God-gifted stamina to begin with. Training alone will not give you that. Like I said, ability to take punishment, God-gifted stamina. You got to have. Plus agility and ability to learn. And you got to be able to punch. So there are five reasons. But if a guy continues, I'm sure, being an amateur champion don't mean nothing in the profession field when the gloves are smaller. The boxers are tougher. Competitions are keener. Then what happens, to have a boy that have five qualities is very rare. If he don't have it, he fail.

END OF SIDE TWO

SIDE ONE (Tape No. 3-14-1-77)

PN: Can you talk about why you didn't want to coach pro?

YK: Actually, you got the other part now. Actually, to have five qualification to become professional. Most sports, I would say, very rarely they qualify in that five. So what happens is if a guy lack the ability to take a punishment or he doesn't have God-gifted stamina, he may as well finish up as a amateur, even as an amateur champ is a great achievement. Now earning money, and this is going to be your livelihood, I'm sure if you fail in any one of them, you not cut out for it. Physically, your mental capacity will be reduced greatly. Because the target of any boxer is the head. So I believe that I'm not knocking boxing. Boxing as a sport is wonderful. But boxing as profession, that's a rough one.

PN: The people who make money are those who promote the fight or backers. Why didn't you go into that like Sad Sam, I guess, is an example?

YK: But we take Sam is partly a businessman. And partly, I would say half and a half. If he's going to make boxers survive, if he's going to contribute to the survival of the game, he may as well go into the business. When he gets into the business, he can supply the game that is close to his heart. This is why he turn professional promoter. But as far as I'm concerned, I do not want any part of boxing as business. I want the sport, yes. So I would go as far as the amateur level, unless that boy is super. Many of the amateur boys, after winning the championship, they wanted to turn pro, but I stop 'em. Usually, it's because of the family status, financially, or if he stand as head of the family, I stop 'em. Or if the guy has cuts, or easily cut, I do not let them turn pro.

PN: So none of the boys you coached as amateurs ever turned pro?

YK: I did. If only when he wants to try it or he's going to somebody else. That somebody else might be not qualified. That somebody else may be looking for...

PN: Did you recommend anybody to go pro, and send them to some other coach?

YK: No. So usually, if the guy insist, I give 'em a chance to find out. And he finds out that I'm correct. That's a rough business because the gloves are small. And...

PN: They hit harder?

YK: Right. And competitions are keener. And now,when you are earning, this is your livelihood. When it becomes business, takes the fun portion out of it.

PN: You said there was about four or five boxing arenas like you mentioned Liberty Dance.

YK: Yeah. Kukui. Next to Kukui Junkyard, anyway. That was run by James Sato. The other one, Liberty Dance Hall, Liliha. And Kewalo Club. And after boxing was legalized, 1929, National Guard had their armory. They had boxing. Below in the basement, in the bowling alley. And they had place for boxing. So National Guard had a good team.

PN: So there was also the Houston Arena.

YK: Yeah. That's later, that's professional. Or not only boxing, too, but for other things. But mainly, I would say for boxing.

PN: Some of these arenas were used for professionals only? No amateur fights held in there also? Like this Houston...

YK: Houston Arena was used for amateurs, too. Stadium.

PN: How did you folks travel from one, you know....

YK: Well, we pool. Carpool.

PN: Be more your own car or somebody else's.

YK: Well, to start off with, I always use my car. Then load in as much of my boxers that I can. And then the others, friends, they have their car.

PN: Most of your boxers, did they come from this Kakaako area?

YK: Most, yes. And some of them are outside.

PN: How would you say you'd rate your boxing club as compared to other boxing clubs? Where would you stand?

YK: You mean quality?

PN: Quality wise.

YK: Well, I would say, seems like bragging, but I would say because of lack of facilities, too. But with all the setback, I did pretty well. And I class my club as one of the tops. JAA had good clubs. Japanese American, CYO, and myself. I would say the three clubs.

PN: They were the top three? There were other clubs from plantations?

YK: City Y, Palama, Kalihi. Palama had good club, too, at one time. Kahuku.

PN: Waialua?

YK: Waialua. They had good club, too, there. It's hard to compare clubs, no. Each one had their good boys, too. But what I'm actually going through is production, end results of how many champions that club had taken out. Had quite a few.

PN: What was this YMA?

YK: Young Men's Association? It's a--Kakaako YMA usually that's the club we have a surfing club. That's comprised of most of the same people. Boxing. They had a baseball team.

PN: This is just close friends in Kakaako?

YK: Including some members of Atkinson Club. Same group.

PN: You organized this?

YK: Yeah. The name YMA was put on by this Young Men's Association. Get the Atkinson Club, some other names, you know. Like the Kakaako Sons. But the name of, I....

PN: How long did it stay in existence?

YK: How long I've been in Kakaako? Oh, I'd say I left Kakaako, I would say 50 years.

PN: It's still going on now?

YK: Yeah, and I'm working in Kakaako right now, too. (Laughs) Because McCoy is Kakaako. McCoy Pavilion. So I would say 50 years, or a little better than that. Fifty-five years, I would say. There were a lot of good athletes from Kakaako. Lot of them.

PN: Could I ask you little bit about where you used to live like that?

YK: That's on South and Pohukaina Street. Then to Koula. Then to Ilaniwai.

PN: Why did your family move all this time?

YK: They were going to tear down the original place where I was. South and Pohukaina. Going to tear that down, going to make warehouse. The second place, I moved from there because I was in the insurance business. And the environment there wasn't too good, you know, when you're an insurance man. So I moved from there to Alewa Heights. And from there back to Ilaniwai because my wife opened a restaurant right on the corner of Queen and Ward Avenue, where the bank is right now. Liberty Bank is. And in the meantime, I bought a place out at Kuliouou. That was 16 years ago. But I've rented it out. And I stayed at Sheridan, too, because my wife's--the restaurant was torn down, because going to make room for the bank. I was going to buy that property, but they jack it up. Was 45,000 [dollars], 50 cents a square foot; 10,000 square feet. But following week they jack it up to $75,000. I still was going to buy it. But then the service station came with a $100,000 want that place. They jack it up again. Then the Liberty Bank bought 'em.

PN: Who owned that place?

YK: Was Chang, I think, owned that place. And this is within a few months it went up. I couldn't pay more than 75 [$75,000]. To start off with, I didn't have the money anyway. Way out of my class.

PN: Going back again to your job, could you tell me little about your Inter-Island Shipyard work you used to do?

YK: Yes. I was a sheet metal worker. Machinist, outside machinist, combination. So whenever boat need repairs, they come in, we do the machinery repairs. And whatever lifeboats need be repaired, we tackle that. Ventilators, installing, and replacing rusty parts.

PN: How much did that job pay?

YK: That was about $2.25 an hour. That was, I would say, right now, equivalent to today's foreman's pay.

PN: That was high paying job?

YK: Yeah, that was.

PN: How did you get that job?

YK: Originally, right after Washington Intermediate, I went to a blacksmith shop. And already, blacksmith were very scarce those days. It was at Liberty Service Station, Liberty Auto Shop out on King Street. So I started there as an apprentice only to keep me occupied. Well, my

parents' old friends look job for me. So I was there about a year. And I learned a lot. From there, after blacksmithing, repair automobile springs. Of course no horseshoe was involved.

PN: No horse?

YK: Straighten out axles somewhere along that line. Then finally, I landed one job out Inter-Island Shipyard. And they had a job as a blacksmith helper over there. And that job later on became Joe Pao's job. Joe Pao. I was in the machine shop already. At Inter-Island. I did not take that blacksmith job, now. When I was hired as a machinist helper.

PN: Joe Pao became the apprentice?

YK: At that time, when Joe Pao was at Inter-Island Drydock , that's what it was called, he had a property. I think it was near University, anyway. University of Hawaii. It was the father's property. The father left it for him. He sold and this is how he got interested in real estate. And that time he still was working in the shipyard. And he sold some more after that. Then he asked me to join him. But Mike Scarfone, who was working in the storeroom at that Inter-Island, somehow Joe Pao enticed Mike Scarfone is the name of this guy to work for him. And Mike stayed with him for a long time. I'm sure he's still with that outfit, although Joe passed away. So he's one guy that really did a hell of a lot for Hawaii. He met lot of criticism about--you would see bumper stickers saying "Stop Pao Now" but this guy, really, what he did for Hawaii is something fantastic.

PN: Going back to your job again, what hours did you work?

YK: Regular eight hours. Start from seven, you know, 7 o'clock, then he knock off 4 o'clock.

PN: How often would the ships come in to dry dock?

YK: Actually, the Inter-Island, and the Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company that was handling transportation, you know, such as passenger ship boat. Like the Hualalai, Waialeale, are the boats that we do repairs on. And the airlines. That was part of Inter-Island Shipyards, or Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company.

PN: It's the early Hawaiian Airlines?

YK: Right. And the son is the president of different airlines. Kennedy. Edgar Kennedy was then the president of the Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company.

PN: How many other people from Kakaako used to work down at this dry dock?

YK: There were a lot of them. Lot of them. I would say single people who were living outside of the area, who worked in dry dock, the shipyard,

moved into Kakaako, so that they can be close by. So I would say Punchbowl Street that runs down, go right along, right down pass City Hall, right down, would hit smack into Ala Moana at a "T." If you were to stand right on the corner over there, of Ala Moana and Punchbowl, you are looking right into the shipyard. Or the dry dock. It was a towering thing. It was called Pier Two. That's right.

PN: And how long you work there?

YK: I put in....up to 1949.

PN: That's when they closed down or something?

YK: That's right.

PN: What happened?

YK: 1949. Well, they weren't coming ahead. They weren't coming ahead. Because there's such thing as Sherman Anti-Trust Law. Monopolizing, because they had the airlines and shipyard and passenger boat.

PN: So they were controlling all the interisland shipping?

YK: So what happened, they had to split that. Well, dry dock wasn't losing money, but it wasn't worth it, because union came in, ILWU came in. And this is where Bob McElrath first work for us.

PN: Oh, he worked at Inter-Island?

YK: That's the first job that he had. He ask to come from Mainland, was at Inter-Island Drydock..

PN: What other kinds of jobs was there around the dry dock? You mention there was a blacksmith?

YK: When we have contracts, like for instance repairing Matson boats, lifeboats, engine parts must be remade, you know. The machine shop will take over the job, and they make new parts.

PN: Were there carpenters also?

YK: Carpenters, right. Carpenters, usually, boat carpenters. Like Tugboat Huki was made at Inter-Island Drydock. So what happen is when they talk about carpentry work, is related to ships' cabin or things like repairing lifeboat, building tugboats, pleasure boats.

PN: There would be like painters and things like that to paint the boats?

YK: Yeah, and painters who come over on the dry dock and do the painting of the waterline. Below water line, painting copper paint and so forth. Above the water line would be red lead.

PN: What kind of nationality people would be working?

YK: Usually, the Filipinos were what we call scrapers, and do the scraping of the barnacles and so forth. Japanese and Hawaiian, part-Hawaiian, Chinese were more shipwrights or boiler makers, you know. We had boiler making shop, too. And machine shop would be all mixed. Hawaiians, Japanese. Sheet metal were all Japanese.

PN: What about supervisors?

YK: Supervisors were mixed. Hawaiians and Japanese. Crew or gang foremen were mostly mixed.

PN: So in the whole shipyard, how much workers would you say?

YK: I would say had about 200.

PN: Was pretty big....

YK: I think it was, well, it's called a floating dry dock, see. Because what happens is you have the pontoons underneath. And then they open a gate valve on both ends of the pontoon. Then it sinks. And then what happens is on the top of both side have a structure that would look something like a "U," including the pontoon as the base and upright structure that would be hollow, made of steel. And when the gates are opened, the valves are opened, then it'll take in water and it start sinking. Then a ship comes in between. Then they start pumping water out of that, through the same gate.

PN: Oh, I see.

YK: Then what happens, it empties the water then the docks are floating. You be surprised, you take up this Merchant Marine boat that's, I don't know what kind of a tonnage they have. They lift it up.

PN: They would lift that up?

YK: Oh yes.

PN: And then you folks would go and work on the boat?

YK: We work on the propellor, shaft or whatever, propellor blade that needs repairing. That's what we do. We take one plate off, and the boiler shop people will come over and put new plates on.

PN: This would be constant work all year around?

YK: Right.

PN: How many ships did Inter-Island have?

YK: They had the Hualalai, Waialeale, Humuula, Hawaii.

PN: They were passenger or....

YK: Passengers and freight.

PN: They were a combination of both.

YK: Yeah. But a cattle boats were limited to Humuula and Hawaii.

PN: How, they were strictly cattle boats?

YK: Yeah, but they could take passengers 'cause there's area for passengers. But the fare is a lot cheaper because you be keeping company with cattle, so that's cheaper. But the ones on the Hualalai were strictly more freight, and no livestock. You know, freight. And because there's cargo hold large enough to take care quite a bit of freight. But more passengers. We were concentrating more passengers. Beautiful boats. Then had the Haleakala. Prior to that, 1927, 1928, had the Haleakala, Claudine. These are all Inter-Island service.

PN: There was about how many boats in the Inter-Island?

YK: Six.

PN: And how long would a boat stay up in dry dock?

YK: I would say two days. Two days. Painting, scraping, repainting. I would say scraping the barnacles off, water retard, painting, and whatever repair. About two days.

PN: Then what? They'd go back out to sea?

YK: Right. And go back to their schedule run.

PN: I don't understand how you guys could have work all year round then?

YK: We tackling Matson boats.

PN: Oh, not only Inter-Island?

YK: Say, for instance, repair had to be done. Not needing dry docking, but relating to engine room. Well, the machinist go with a truck, bring your tools and repair.

PN: Did they give you any kind of schooling to teach you becoming mechanic, a machinist rather?

YK: Well, most of the guys that actually learned, like in my case, I was started off as a helper, but I pick it up.

PN: Oh, along the way.

YK: Like in the condenser case. Condenser is the one that you use salt water. It's a great big, huge drum that has holes in 'em, you know. And what they do is to condense salt water into fresh water. And this fresh water is used in the engine room in the boiler, to create steam to run the engine. So on long runs like during the war like that, you got to have such a thing called condenser, 'cause you going to run out of water. Otherwise the guys cannot take shower or for cooking you need it.

PN: They used it for cooking, drinking.

YK: For what we do is we repair condensers that are on a destroyer or big battleship.

PN: Worked on all kind of....

YK: Yeah. Navy transport, army transport, go over there and repair. So we have constant job. The carpenters would do carpentry in the cabin or other things, you know. The lifeboat, many of them were made out of wood.

PN: You know, out of all the jobs there in Inter-Island Drydock , which job paid the highest, which job paid the lowest?

YK: Was machinist.

PN: Machinist got the highest pay? And the scrapers the lowest?

YK: Yeah. Machinist,boiler maker getting the high pay.

PN: What about during the war? What happened to you folks?

YK: This is where we had a lot of job, because we had a lot of government, I would say, navy jobs.

PN: But being Japanese during the war wasn't that...

YK: We were restricted. Yeah, we were restricted. We take the condenser repair. It leaks. And the condenser end plates, it's round like that, shape like a great big barrel. Two end plates are thick about inch and a quarter thick. And these are brass so that it contains salt water. So evidently, the brass is to prevent rust. And when that thing leak between the tube, you got to solder that. So soldering can never be done when you have liquid inside there. Lot of people do not realize that, but that's true. You can never solder any utensils anything when water in the pot or whatever. You got to get it out. So even getting it out there's moisture. So to fix this condenser, it sweats out and water will flow down. To fix it, got to know how. And they

call Navy Yard, they were busy. So what happen is you got to get a specialist who can handle that job, particular job, so that you could solder it. And soldering is not easy if you don't heat it properly. Now, if you over heat it, what happens to that sweated-in solder that were originally been there, that would melt, and you in trouble. You get into bigger trouble. So all these thing takes lot of tact. And during the war years, because the troop transport must meet the convoys at a certain hour out in the Pacific, they cannot delay. They have to go out. This is where I came in. They called me. But when I went on the gangplank, you know, they sent a guard, a SP [Shore Patrol] on my tail.

PN: To follow you around?

YK: Yeah. Every movement make or go up and down to get few material, hammer and tools, they follow me with a gun in the back of me. But he act friendly, because the guy, that's his job. He was assign to watch me.

PN: Did any other people on the boat harass you or call you....

YK: No. No trouble. But you wouldn't like that. You feel uneasy. You cannot work. So I reported that to the superintendent of the shipyard. So I called from the port, from where the boat was moored. My superintendent was Al Correa from Providence, Rhode Island. He said, "Yono, pick up your tools and come right back. Heck with those guys." So I pick up my tool, the guy followed me, the truck picked me up. I went back. Half an hour later they begged me to come back. And the guys says, "No. Take that guard off then he goes back."

"Well, it's just a formality. We got orders to place a guard on a restricted personnel that's working. That's our orders."

And he said, "Well, if that's your order, how you expect a guy do a good job if I were to do the same thing to you? Can you work?"

They stop.

PN: So what they did?

YK: They pick up the foreman, they call up all around. Knock the guard off. That's when I started working. Practically impossible. I'm going down to drink water to the next deck. Well, I'm used to. I run up so fast, the guy is not used to, slide all over the place. When I go down like this, the steps are like this. And it's made of metal. Although it's crease so that you won't slide. But he got to hit hard. I grab the handle and slide all the way down. Like that.

(Laughter)

YK: Oh, he was really perspiring just trying to follow me around.

PN: You didn't have to have any kind of a special badge?

YK: Yes. You have to....a button type, you know. There's a picture of you and it says "Restricted." The badge is black. Well, you don't blame them in a sense. Security. Because they get a hell of a lot material on that boat, and they got to rent room at one place.

PN: So these restrictions, like sentries posted, this only happened on military ships, not on the...

YK: Our ship.

PN: ...Inter-Island like that?

YK: No. Only on the military ship.

PN: Was it required of you all of the time?

YK: Yeah.

PN: Get 200 workers at Inter-Island. They required to wear a badge also?

YK: Yeah.

PN: Same color?

YK: They have white. We have the black.

PN: The Japanese had the black?

YK: Yeah. And yet, at same time when I'm working there, under the same circumstances, I knock off work, when I go home, I get the boys ready for fight. Truck pick us up, go Schofield Barracks, entertain the servicemen.

PN: No hassle?

YK: No. It's all on the same day, you know. So it's very unique, you know. So when you think about it,you chuckle to yourself, because chee.

PN: Well, I guess we can wrap it up here. Thank you for your time.

YK: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW.

Tape No. 3-23-2-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yonoichi Kitagawa (YK)

January 31, 1978

McCoy Pavilion, Honolulu

BY: Perry Nakayama (PN)

PN: This is the second interview with Mr. Yonoichi Kitagawa on January 31, 1978, in the McCoy Pavilion.

Mr. Kitagawa, last time we talked mostly about boxing so, you know, I wanted to talk to you about your early childhood, living on South and Pohukaina Street. How long did you folks live there?

YK: We moved from South and Pohukaina Street, 1929. So, 1913 (birth year) and 1929 would be about 16.

PN: So that's about 16 years then.

YK: Yeah, 16. Not exactly. I think I was about, younger than that though. So could be...

PN: About around 1928, 1929. Around there.

YK: Yeah, about that. That's more correct. 1927, 1928 is more correct.

PN: Do you know why you folks moved from that area?

YK: Well, we move because, primarily speaking, we were living in a tenement. Whereas, if we moved to the new places, it'll be closer to Kewalo Basin for my father's commercial fishing. And it's not as--I would say, get more privacy, because we moved into duplex rather than a tenement. By tenement I mean there were three occupancy upstairs. Downstairs, three. Across had also similar thing. Three downstairs, three upstairs. So, in other words, 3, 6, 9, 12 families were living in one area.

PN: In this one building?

YK: Two building facing each other. Six on one side. Six on the other side. Two stories. We were down on the ground floor. Corner. Exact corner on Pohukaina and South.

PN: Do you know who owned the building?

YK: No, I don't.

PN: What kind of household chores, duties did you have?

YK: Well, because actually it was a two room--I would say more like a flat, you know. Actually, it is a big room but it's partitioned off. So it becomes two rooms. And generally, this is the idea adopted by the Japanese people that come from their home country. What they do is, you don't find no beds around, you know, it's stored. What they do is sleep on the floor. What they call this futon. Is put in the corner. So, one room which we call where we sleep is the bedroom, you know. I would say it's just empty of things. Few trunks where you carry, I would say, clothes like that, you know. And what we do is when we do sleep, we take the futon from the corner and lay it flat and sleep on it. Then the other room as you enter the door, soon as you get in, is the kitchen.

PN: This is all downstairs?

YK: Right, downstairs. We were in the downstairs corner. So, upstairs like-wise. There's a step between the two buildings facing each other. It was a step that goes upstairs. Now, it's accessible to upstairs from two sides, both sides. One on the makai side and one on the mauka side.

PN: This is outside of the building?

YK: Right.

PN: And, what was upstairs?

YK: Upstairs, it's the same way. They were all fishermens there, you know. So, the set up was about the same. No difference.

PN: Oh, you folks didn't occupy the upstairs and downstairs?

YK: No, no. Upstairs is different family. In other words, there were 12 different families. Three downstairs, three upstairs. Opposite side is the similar type building. With three downstairs and three upstairs. So, six. And between that two we had access to the second floor, I would say, of the tenement. From both ways--one from makai and one from mauka. Mountain side.

PN: So, your kitchen and your--was right when you enter the door.

YK: As you enter the door would be the kitchen. And, of course, those days you hardly have any, I would say, not too fabulous. No such thing as what we call icebox, you know. But later on, we did have icebox. But then, the iceman brings 'em over. And the people who buy ice, well, I

would say, was people that had good income. But in my case, no, we never had icebox until later on. After we moved, you know, to...

PN: Koula Street?

YK: Koula.

PN: So you folks--your mother did all the cooking?

YK: Yes. My mother live like--have two sisters above me that are still living. One brother above me that is living. Two died. That was above me.

PN: Oh, you were the youngest.

YK: Yeah, right now. Of course, I had a brother that died stillborn, you know. And sisters that were stillborn, too. But of course, of the ones that lived, I would be the youngest. So, my brother that is living now, he's 80 years old. Still living yet. And, he stays out at what lane that? The lane above Vineyard, School Street.

PN: Later on you can tell me about that. So, who else was living in this tenement building? What kind of neighbors did you have?

YK: Kanayama. Okay. On the ground floor, Waikiki side of the tenement, ground floor. We were on the corner, on Pohukaina Street side. And, next to me, I would say, then that would mean that the middle room, you know, was occupied by the Kimura family. He was the best opelu fisherman that ever was. And, he use seine, you know, net. Amazing fisherman, you know. He's real terrific. Then, came Uichi Kanayama was living there.

PN: Oh, Uichi lived right in your same building?

YK: Right. In other words, let's say that, I would say maybe 30 feet, eh. Let's say that our room was 30 feet. So, 3, 6, 9, I would say about 100 feet. The last one their family.

PN: Kanayama?

YK: Right.

PN: And his father was fisherman, too?

YK: Fisherman. All. All of them were fishermen.

PN: Oh, all these 12 tenants were fishermen?

YK: Right, we all fishermens. Later on, there was a masseur that moved upstairs directly above Kanayama. And the name was Murata. Murata's

son-in-law, the one that married his daughter, stepdaughter, is the one that have the Red and White or Blue and White kamaboko factory right down here.

PN: Oh, oh, oh. The Red and White.

YK: Goto.

PN: The Goto family?

YK: Yeah.

PN: So, were you folks close to all these families because they were fishermen?

YK: You mean relationship?

PN: You know, did you folks do things together as family...

YK: Ah yes. Many times, like we take, for instance, like cooking rice like that. Right between, well, I would say another 80 or more feet, 100 or more feet, is just like a yard. Within that area is each one had their own stove. You know, the old fashioned stove. Concrete, you know. Just like oven-type, but you rest your Japanese, what you call, pot, to cook rice. It's not community. Each one had their own.

PN: Oh, but this is out in the yard?

YK: Out, yeah. In other words, I would say, Kanayama would be more accessible to that kitchen.

PN: Oh, he would be closer.

YK: But our type of kitchen what we call is the tables, small table where you sit and eat, you know. In our house. But the cooking was done outside. Firewood.

PN: So, would you folks cook rice together and share it with the other families?

YK: Ah no. Each one had their own. I would say, slot for their cooking. So in other words, there were 12 of 'em. Six on one side, six on this side. There's a shed. In that shed, there's--was six for the families, six for the other families. Then, if you were to look at it, it looks like sort of like a Portuguese kind of a oven type, you know.

PN: Oh, it round?

YK: Well, almost round. But then, you have a stand like this table. That's well structured. You know, solid. On top of that they have concrete. Where there's puka where you put your pot.

PN: Pot or pan or something?

YK: Yeah. Now, next to it was bathroom. All this time, tenants would go to the bathroom. Each one come, there's two. Partition. One side for the men, one side for the ladies.

PN: Oh, this would serve for all 12 families?

YK: Right.

PN: Shee. Where would you folks take a bath like that?

YK: Right there. Now, we have--each family would go, eh. It's a big bathroom, you know. Big bathroom. So, you have ample space. You figure, got to accommodate 12 families so the bathroom would be, oh, I would say, concrete floor and I would say it's about 20-by-20 (feet); 20-by-20 or 20-by-25 (feet), you know. Girls and boys are separate.

PN: This would be furo or showers?

YK: Some people---well, what we do is we make fire outside, you know. Where the kitchen is. You get your can, you know. Big can, five-gallon drum or stuff like that. Then, you want to take a bath, you get your own tub, you know, galvanized tub. You put the hot water in there. So, you got to lug it back, you know, with bucket. And then...

PN: Fill up the tub.

YK: Pour it in there. Yeah. Each one have their own tub, hanging on the wall. Some of them they turn it upside down. They leave it on the concrete floor. So it really was, I would say, primitive. But almost immaculate. You know, clean. You know, they would take great pride in bathroom, so it really look nice. It doesn't smell at all. Now, if I were to give you a drawing, I would say that there's a toilet. Each family had their toilet. That building, that structure, is a shed actually. Right in between had all this what you call, stove. Six on one side, six on the other side. That means mauka---six, makai---six. Bordered, I would say, bordered by, on one end, the toilets. Each one would have their separate keys, you see. So, six on one side, six on the other side of the building. Now, between that building, I would say, between the toilets on the other end, this is where the bathroom come in. Now if I were to tell you that from Ewa end of that shed there's a toilet, toilet, then comes the bathroom. And then come the kitchen. And then another group of toilets.

PN: Oh, oh. I see. Yeah, yeah.

YK: Well, picture it. If you were looking from above, it's oblong. Oblong. Bordered by both side toilets. And one end, partition. It's a big structure, 20-by-20 (feet). You find your bathroom. Partition right

in the center where it separates the men and the ladies. Then, comes where we cook rice. And then come the same, I would say, design. Urinal and, I would say, where you pull the chain, you know. In the old days.

(PN laughs)

YK: Pull the chain. The tank, the supply tank is above. And you pull the chain and causes quite a long drop for the water, but, that's the way it was. More operated by gravitational force so it probably keep 'em higher, then you have more force, eh. So, it was, oh, I would say approximately that tank would be approximately six feet from the toilet bowl.

PN: Would you folks do things with your neighbors like go church?

YK: Well, actually, church we would say because the Jodo Mission is close by. I would say, all you had to do is pass Halekauwila and Queen. Then you right there. Behind Magoon Block is your church. So, it's not too far. I would say, approximately, leisurely, if you were to walk would take about 10 minutes. Eight minutes.

PN: But, did your family like go with the other...

YK: With who?

PN: Kanayama family.

YK: The relationship as far as having arguments or things along the line, very rarely, you know. Maybe a spat or so, but usually they are closely knitted. Very, very close. Each one trying to help each other, you know. There's no such thing as brawl between camps, you know. So, when we talk about the camp, this is one camp. Aoki Camp will be directly across us. Where the Honolulu Planing Mill was. And, on the downside, makai side of Pohukaina, right on the corner of Pohukaina and South was the Honolulu Iron Works called,at that time,Catton-Neil. Must be partners, you know.

PN: What was the name?

YK: Ah, Catton-Neil. C-A-T-T-O-N. N-E-I-L. They deal with, I would say, oh, machinery where they do a lot of forging. I forgot what the name, what you call that. So...

PN: But anyway, going back to your neighbors like that, were they all from the same prefecture? You know, all these fishermen?

YK: Maybe one or two that are different, you know, but mostly were from Yamaguchi-ken, you know. Yamaguchi. And, our family come from the island off Yamaguchi. And it's a tiny island where, although how tiny it is, you'd be amazed how many of the families like Mackay's parents,

Kanayama parents, Fukuda parents, you know. They come from the same place. It's a tiny island but amazing. Of course, they Yamaguchi-ken.

PN: So, is this how you became friends with, I guess, Uichi and Mackay Yanagisawa, because you lived in the same camp?

YK: Yeah, and when they do go church, well, we say that you'll have club, you know, because not in the sense that you have something that you would like in today's case. You'll have a chairman and stuff like that, you know. Out of random a guy would pick to head the group. Somebody would go around collect, I would say, dues, you know. And nothing along parliamentary procedure. (Laughs) Just what we call going back to old days. Just friendship. But, they do have what we call at that time call, club, you know. Like in our club we call Kamuro Jin Kai. Now, Kakaako Chiho Jin Kai is the entire Japanese community in Kakaako.

PN: Oh, it's the community and then the Kamuro would be from the prefecture or town?

YK: Right. You are right there.

PN: So your parents belong to that.

YK: Kamuro. Yeah.

PN: You know, you folks played together and stuff like that. You folks went school together and all your friends like that. Was there any kind of activities that--well, we learned about sports and mostly boys playing football, baseball and all kind of recreation. Was there any kind of things that the girls did together?

YK: Amazing. Amazing thing that usually girls, those days and those times, heavy concentration were on sewing.

PN: Oh yeah?

YK: Yeah. So, I would say it's part of the ancestral kind of a tradition where girl stays home, they learn sewing, you know. But it was carried on here. So you don't find girls those days go out--stepping out. No more such thing as stepping out. Where would they go anyway, you know. And many of the houses that I been to, no electricity. Use kerosene lamp. And, telephone was something that you don't even see.

PN: So your sisters like that stayed home most of the time?

YK: Right. Mostly. And because Punahou in Punahou area, Manoa area, I would say we had these people like the Cookes and so forth, you know. The girls were hired for the efficiency and loyalty. So they were maids. Many of the Japanese girls were used.

PN: Were your sisters maids?

YK: My sister worked for one of these people. So she learned American cooking. And so was Kanayama girls, you know. Of course, not everyone had job to work as maid, but they did.

PN: So she would help your mother cook sometimes?

YK: Yes, during weekends. Weekdays, they are working. And they have maid quarters, eh.

PN: Oh, they would live by Punahou and things like that?

YK: Uhm. So you would find that it's not only applies to Kakaako girls being employed as maids in Manoa. There were Japanese girls from Palama, Kalihi, were maids, you know. So, now and then you'll hear certain guys picking certain maid up from certain, certain place. (Laughs) You know. What the residence there because there's a maid over there. Weekends when the girls are free, many times this is how they married. You know, when they get to see the boys and they get married to 'em, you know.

PN: So, as friends, most of your friends were Japanese?

YK: Most, yeah. Most. The reason for that is because you live in a community where predominantly these people are Japanese anyway. See. Of course, we had friends but amazingly your relationship between the Hawaiian people and the Japanese were very close. And, for the Japanese old people, although they were immigrants, amazingly how they get adapted to the Hawaiian language. Because many of the, I would say, vowels, you know, I would say are similar to Hawaiian. You take the word "pau," You know, it's easy for the Japanese to say "pau." You know, "Umauma" in Hawaiian means breast, you know. For Japanese, when you teach a kid "umauma" it means candy, you know. Something that's tasteful.

(PN laughs)

YK: That's why the Japanese people get adapted easier to Hawaiian language, like Japanese old man would say, "No pilikia. No pilikia." (Laughs) See, it's so easy to say. But they would have great difficulty in English, you know, because you have the "r's," they get...

PN: Oh, they stuck.

YK: ...stuck on that kine. But, Hawaiian you don't have that "r's," you see.

PN: Where did you folks play like that when you were small kid time?

YK: Well, because we easily, I would say, we're near waterfront, we were out at Pier Two, outside of Squattersville. Stone Wall, we call it eh.

Tantalus, Punchbowl. So many areas, you know. We don't run into traffic. No traffic. No automobiles, so you don't worry it.

PN: You folks just walked wherever you folks wanted to go?

YK: We go in large groups, you know. And this is why we really feel what we call--even Mark Twain express it, you know--Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn or whatever, you know--that kind of a, when a guy like my age will really, I really understand the meaning because we were no different. So, what we read about Pedrod and Sam or Huckleberry Finn (Laughs), we enjoy it. Because this is the very type of life we led.

PN: Where was most of your time spent in terms of playing and stuff like that? Would be within Kakaako itself?

YK: That's right. Because, I would say, access to playgrounds, the beaches, or I would say, right there.

PN: So these trips out to Punchbowl or Tantalus like that..

YK: That's right (once) in a great while, but later on, we were going more and more. Later on, as we got into the late teens, you know. Then we did a lot of hiking. We more knowledgeable of the mountain, so it was more strenuous but more enjoyable.

PN: What was your parents' reaction to, I guess, when you're younger, you know, going, leaving the district? Did they put any kind of boundary limits to where you could go?

TK: No. Because those days, crime rates were really low. I could remember there isn't a house that was locked. So, I would say, crime rates were nil. Rape cases, never heard of 'em. Never heard of 'em.

PN: So your parents wouldn't say like, you know, you couldn't go beyond certain...

YK: Because it's getting dark so it will be dangerous--no. No. No such thing. So, we would know too anyway, because when it gets dark, what's the use of being out, you know. But in later teen years, of course, you want to take a look at other places like Tantalus, you know. We tell the parents that where we are going. They not worried. Because nobody will intercept us for any immoral purposes or what. (Laughs)

(PN laughs)

YK: Everything was trusted--amazing. Was beautiful.

PN: So the things you did like hiking or playing sports or anything like that, was done mainly with a bunch of boys?

YK: Yes.

PN: Would there be any kind of girls going hiking with you folks?

YK: No. Usually girls, during our days, girls stays home. Stays home. And, boys were all together. And, of course, there were certain segment of boys that, I would say, they chronologically, their age group would go together. The younger group boys would go together different places. So, as you gets older, your friends will get older with you. So you remain buddies for a long, long time.

PN: So the friends you were hanging around at that time were about the same age as you?

YK: Yeah, still yet. And you'd be amazed our relationship, never change. And when we do run into 'em now, although we're scattered, we do run into 'em. That's when one of the boys that used to run around with us, our same age, had passed away. You know. So this is where we more or less congregate and talk about old times. And it happens occasionally.

PN: Speaking of funerals like that, back then, when you were small like that, did you guys attend any funerals for your parents' friends or anything like that?

YK: I did. What happened was, those days, they call it "hack." This, well, it's not automobile. It's horse drawn. You know, the hearse is horse drawn. It's not something beautiful. I would say, too angular. It was like a box, you know. But with curtains. Looked pretty nice. But then it's not streamlined.

PN: Would your parents go around and collect money for the deceased's family?

YK: Yeah, that has been always the custom. Even today, you know. Just like, instead of, well, many people feel that, rather than flower, you know, they give. In those days, of course, flowers you got to go to the florist, but it's easier to give money. So, that it's still like this today.

PN: Did they have--you folks go to funeral parlors?

YK: Yeah, mostly because Hosoi had a dressmaking shop right in Kakaako. Well, Kakaako people deal with Hosoi. So, Hosoi had a mortuary, and was on Kukui Street. Well, it was a small place, but kept clean. And more so, Kakaako people, when they do have funeral service, it's done by Hosoi.

PN: Oh, because they know the family through the dress shop?

YK: Right. And Hosoi is a Kakaako family anyway.

PN: You know, you said you went to the Japanese Language School. Which Japanese Language School was this?

YK: I went to Masuda. There was two. One is Kishida. Kishida and Masuda. I was in Masuda.

PN: Could you explain what happened, I guess I'm talking about the split in the Japanese Language School. Could you explain what you saw or what you remember at that time?

YK: Yeah. At that time, of course, I was younger. Way younger. The mind not too clear about what happened in higher echelon or among educated people, you know. 'Cause we were more busy playing. But, what I gathered, what I thought was that one was similar to a person feeling that you'd rather stick to the old, I would say, ancestry kind of a living or whether we want to adopt many of this American system or American ways of living. So somehow, the main thing is that on Matsuda's side was that they were thinking about, I would say, that you are a Japanese. You are living on American grounds, you know. Be loyal to your country. Now, on the other end, Kishida, it's not that they against, you know, the United States, nothing like that at all. But, I would say, they more Japanese, you know. Their thinking.

PN: Pro-Japanese?

YK: Yeah, they were for, their thinking along is more home country, you know. But not to a reason or treason or stuff like--no, no, no. No thinking of that. Nothing to overthrow the government. But that's my thinking. But, this is where the split came in.

PN: You were going to Japanese School at that time?

YK: Yes.

PN: About how old were you?

YK: Well, Japanese School had till high school, so I graduated. (Laughs)

PN: Oh, you went...

YK: Yeah. That high school, I would say, 12 years; 12 years.

PN: That's about 12 years old.

YK: Thirteen, 13 years. By God, I really wish that I had put more effort or time and concentrated on 'em, you know. But those days, while I went to school and many of my friends go to school, we bring dried shrimp to class. Stand the book up and behind there we were eating dried shrimp, all kinds of seeds, you know.

(PN laughs)

YK: Chinese seeds. And when the teacher came and knock the book down, here we were going at it. Many times, where the book was propped up in

front of me, I was sleeping. Of course, then they weren't that strict too, but. So when I went to Japan recently, I sure miss that language. I wish I had really put my mind to it. And many times during my growing up years, I really had rued the day that I had not taken Japanese seriously.

PN: Why did you go to Japanese School?

YK: Well, because usually my friends go. Their parents send 'em. My parents sent me. So, it's just that, not the matter of trying to concentrate on learning itself, but the idea is to pacify the parents that we are attending Japanese School. And they were right. When they said, "One day you going to regret it." Which is true. Many times where I wish I had put more efforts.

PN: What did your parents have to say about the dispute that was going on between the Japanese?

YK: Parents hardly discussed that. It's the matter of the board on both side of the school, you know. The faction. So they are the ones that actually do more tangling. But coming down to the parents of the students, nah, I don't think they ever engage in any kind of a verbal, I would say, confrontation along that line. No.

PN: They didn't say like they favored one side over the other?

YK: Well, I tell you why my parents sent me over to Matsuda, is because it was closer.

PN: Oh. (Laughs)

YK: Yeah. More closer. Because I don't think my parents understand what was going on. You know. And, being shiso or hishiso, they won't know the difference.

PN: What about your friends at that time? Did you have any friends going to other school?

YK: We did. We did.

PN: Did that hurt the friendship?

YK: That mean my friend parents' friend is on the board. So, he has influence over his father so they go to that school. So, the students itself never, they not arguing, but...

PN: Did you have any kind of disagreements....

YK: With the students of the other school?

PN: Did your friend's father say don't go play with you because...

YK: No, no, no.

PN: ...you going to the opposite school? None of that?

YK: Because they're neighbors, you know. We get along fine. So even though where neighbors close by each other, the parents send their kids to one faction or the other one goes to Matsuda or whatever. They still friends. That kind of a feeling had never existed where one would destroy the other, you know. So, I would say, we had enough Japanese in the community at that time in Kakaako to satisfy both factions. So, both of the schools, as far as attendance, were doing very well. (Laughs) Very well.

PN: Let me ask you about, you know, you playing football like that. When did you become involved with barefoot football?

YK: That was 1928. And 1929 and right up [to] 1936. Wait, the last....no, 1934, when we took the championship. And the last, I think, Mr. Kanayama gave up football, you know. He was a good coach, though. Amazing.

PN: How did you get to play football? Did somebody ask you turn out?

YK: Usually, well, there's nothing else to do, you know. So what we do is gather together. We're Konpira-san, Kiawe Tree group, you know. And Wally Amioka, those people, were Tamura Store group. They were hanging around the corner of Tamura. That would be Pohukaina and Cooke, you know. That's where they would hang around. And our group was right across the temple, the Konpira-san group, you know. And we call ourself "The Kiawe Tree," the Kiawe Tree group. And we had shade under there. So we play music. It's amazing. So the group that we had was the largest, I think. We had so many.

PN: Okay, what other groups---wait, wait, let me talk about these groups first of all. You say they had this Tamura Store group and you folks were the Kiawe Tree group?

YK: Yeah.

PN: Were there any other groups that you knew of?

YK: I'm sure the Alapai had their group, too, you know. Alapai is right where the junkyard. You know, that Honolulu Junk. Where the new building is. Is from there on toward Cooke. Just around there. So, they had Alapai group. But that's Kakaako, although it's called Alapai. Alapai actually is a street name. They had their group. And they had teams. They had teams. But because of the, I would say, lack of residency in that area, naturally, you get a smaller group of boys, you know. Not as great as ours. Ours cover a bigger field. So, as far as you like call it a gang. (Laughs) You know, we had the biggest one.

PN: So you folks....I guess at this time you were living Koula Street?

YK: Uhm.

PN: So, you folks just followed the bigger boys into playing football or, how did the teams get started?

YK: No, it just actually come natural, you know. Your age group, if you weigh about 120 pound, you play in the 120-pound division. If you are bigger boy, you play in the 135-pound division. So it just comes natural, you know. No more such thing as, from this group they going play one sport, no. From what other group there are, you know, we all get together. No more such thing as "Eh, you turn out for football. Come on." No. Just it happen natural. Like in my case, I just go over there and there's a practice, so I join the practice. So, it was all different groups playing under one team.

PN: You know this Kiawe group, what nationality were most of the boys?

YK: Japanese.

PN: Mainly Japanese?

YK: Yeah. Of course had some other nationality but, very few of 'em.

PN: Very few. So how did you come to play for the Kakaako Sons? You played for them first?

YK: Yeah, first of all, while they were practicing football so I go over there, I join them. So, I played end for the team. And then, later on, Atkinson already had a team. They were little older group. And, I joined 'em. So, I left the Kakaako Son Midgets to play for the Atkinson. And that's when Mackay was playing also on the team. About the same time we played.

PN: Who was coaching this Kakaako Sons? The Midgets.

YK: The time when they became popular was Julian Judd.

PN: Oh, you mean he coached Senior, Juniors and Midgets?

YK: No, the Midgets was one of the Ho's and Yap. George Yap.

PN: But, when you were playing it was Julian Judd?

YK: Yeah.

PN: Oh, I see.

YK: So when I went to Atkinson, Kanayama was coaching.

PN: Can we talk about the Kakaako Sons first and later, can I talk to you about the Atkinson team next? I like find out who was playing on the Kakaako Sons Midget.

YK: Those were guys like Kapu--we was younger, see. And, I would say, other nationalities get guys that are smaller in stature. This is why we were called Midgets, you know.

(PN laughs)

YK: And that's the 120-pound league. So we had Fidel--well, mix. I think I was on the Kakaako Midgets--the only Japanese, I think.

PN: Oh yeah?

YK: Yeah. Nat Vierra was playing. He's Portuguese. Was playing for the Midgets.

PN: What was the predominant race or nationality?

YK: On the...

PN: Midgets, Kakaako Sons?

YK: Mixed, Portuguese, Hawaiian, you know. More Portuguese-Hawaiian, part-Chinese, you know. But I was the only Japanese on that team.

PN: They were about your age too?

YK: Uhm. They all same age. So in school, they would be my classmates, eh. English School.

PN: What were you? You were left end?

YK: Yeah. Left end.

PN: On offense, what would you be--more a blocker or a passer, or a pass receiver?

YK: Yeah. Pass receiving and blocking. Yeah. See, those days, there's first and second string and most likely you play whole game. You know.

PN: You talking about going both ways?

YK: Yeah. Now days you have two-platoon system, where offensive team goes in. Then they come out and the defensive team take their place, you know. But those days, many times you play full game.

PN: What kind of strategy was going on that time? Was it mostly running or passing kind of thing?

YK: It's more running. More running. And at that time, I saw Willy Whittle play for Healani at the Atkinson Park. I was a little, young boy, you know. And I hardly know what the game was, but then, at that time, I thought it was really brutal, you know. They would actually fight. So the guy grab the ball and once he get tackled they pile on. They keep on piling until the ball carrier hollers, "Down."

PN: Oh yeah?

YK: So that carried on in wrestling too. Later on, you know, in sports, the guy get you down and then you give up. He say, "Down." You know. That's the same thing applied for football. It came from football. And, you keep on piling on until the guy says, "Down." That means he give up.

(PN laughs)

YK: Then, the ball is dead.

PN: Oh yeah?

YK: Yeah. (Laughs) Then the ball is dead.

PN: So there's no referees or anything like that?

YK: They do. They do have referees. So, we had--I watch them. You know, it was quite interesting. So I seen the days of what we call the brutal part of football. Of course, today is brutal too, but--like those days, what goes under the second layer, you don't know. They do a lot of punching. Punching, pinching....

END OF SIDE ONE

Tape No. 3-23-3-78 And Tape No. 3-31-3-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yonoichi Kitagawa (YK)

February 22, 1978

McCoy Pavilion, Honolulu

BY: Perry Nakayama (PN)

PN: This is the third interview with Mr. Yono Kitagawa on February 22, 1978 in the McCoy Pavilion.

Mr. Kitagawa, why did you join the Kakaako Sons football team? You know, why that team rather than Atkinson?

YK: Yeah, actually I was persuaded by someone to play for the Kakaako Sons Midget team. So, of course, later on I shifted to Atkinson. But at that time I didn't care who I played for.

PN: Oh, I see. Why did you change back to--or switch to Atkinson team?

YK: Yeah. Well, many of my friends were playing for Atkinson and they ask me why don't I go to Atkinson where I'll be among friends. Of course, they Kakaako Midget--Kakaako Sons Midget--were guys in there were my friends also, but. Well, I figure they were a little more better organized. They were a little more organized.

PN: Could you compare the two teams? Like what's the difference, let's say...

YK: Yeah. Okay, now we on the Atkinson, well, we had teams that, well, guys that showed up for the practice. They come out everyday without missing and more or less the training hours were more punctual. Whereas, when I was with the Midgets, some guys would not show up. Then you don't have a full team. So you don't have the proper, I would say, coordination among teammates. And naturally, one guy is missing, you know, you can't practice the role, you know, where each one has his own responsibility taking players and all that, you know. Defensive and offensive.

PN: What about style of playing too? Was there any difference?

YK: Well, the plays are basically similar but, I would say, we have more--Atkinson had more, I would say, in the Midget but not the Juniors or the Seniors, but the more, I would say, cooperation from individual team members. Like I say, if couple of guys are missing from the line, you know, they'll be vacancy. Of course, we have someone to fill that position. But then it's not the regular boy. Then you don't get to, I would say, perfect the plays.

PN: What about strategy like that? Was there---was Kakaako Sons more passing or running team?

YK: Those days we had more running team. Running team.

PN: Was there difference in how you folks got your equipment like that between Kakaako Sons and Atkinson team?

YK: Well, equipment we don't have, you know. We don't use shoulder pad. We just....no helmets, no shoulder pads, no hip pads, you know. Just play as is. Barefoot.

PN: Didn't the Atkinson team have a Atkinson club that...

YK: Maybe one or two but....

PN: Fund raisers and, you know, you folks got some money to spend on sports equipment.

YK: Well, because we don't buy equipment, you know. Equipment was optional actually. Maybe one team member who already have a shoulder pad--he would use it. But outside of that, we don't buy equipments. No, nothing. These are same team members that come out year after year, so just like what we say, well-coordinated. Coordinated machinery. See. So, this is one reason why, year after year, we took a championship. Because we better coordinated and each one know his job, his position. So what we do is when we condition up, run the plays right down the field. Line up, running down. So actually, was a matter of, I would say, the guy next to you is just like your brother, you know. You practically live with 'em because day after day you practice with 'em. So we had, I would say, real coordination. The team members really cooperated too.

PN: At that time, was it coach, Uichi Kanayama [who] sent in the plays every time?

YK: Right, right.

PN: How much leeway did the quarterback have in calling plays?

YK: Those days, quarterback calls all the plays.

PN: Oh.

YK: No signal from sideline from the coaches. No. Today, I would say, the football game has really advanced, you know. During our days, it was more rough and tumble. Quarterback, I would say, he would 100 percent call the plays. And he makes decisions.

PN: But, during practice, the coach would...

YK: Yeah. We go through regular plays that we got to perfect. So we do a lot of practice on that.

PN: Who was you folks' quarterback at that time?

YK: Kubo Aoki. And they called him "Flash." He was a good quarterback. Not a speedy runner but as keeping the team together and calling the right plays at the right time, he really was good at it.

PN: What was your parents' attitude towards sports like that?

YK: They were against it. Against it. Really against it. More so, football and boxing. Actually, more body contact sports, eh. And my parents, especially, because I lost two brothers.

PN: Yeah.

YK: And they were really, really against it. But I still used to sneak out, and play, you know.

PN: They knew that you were playing football?

YK: Yeah, they know. But they got tired, you know, reprimanding me. No sense of talking, you know. So they got to accept it later on. They think probably there's no use of talking to a boy that won't listen anyway. (Laughs)

PN: Did they ever come out and watch you play, you know?

YK: No. All the parents, especially the age of my parents--the Isseis, eh. So I would say, sports--football, boxing--it's something that really vicious to them because they were not exposed to it. So the parents wouldn't come out. They don't understand the game in the first place, you know.

PN: What kind of recreation, you know, did the parents then have, you know?

YK: Well, see, like in my case too, like I would say, well, 90 percent of the parents, you know, of Japanese ancestry, they're fishermens. So they busy. They fish nighttime, you know. Or off-shore fishing. They come back, they sleep during the day. So, nighttime, they go out. That's akule fishermen. So what happened is, as far as sports is concerned, except once in a great while, they have what we call sumo tournament out at Moiliili or Palama and Kalihi. That's when the parents, if by chance they are around that neighborhood, they drop by and watch sumo tournament. Outside of that, no sports at all. No sports.

PN: You know, when you were young, you said you took up gymnastics.

YK: Yeah.

PN: How did you get involved in that?

YK: Well, I used to hang around Nuuanu YMCA. You know, they had a very small pool. And you find that there's a big gymnasium. You can play basketball and there was this gymnastics room where you can take up tumbling or whatever. They had mats. And those days, mats are not good as the mats of today, you know. You have crash landing mats today and that will, I would say, alleviate a lot of problems in regards to injury. You know, it save you from injury. But those days were just plain canvas felt mat that was, I would say, the external part of it was made of canvas. And very heavy. Very heavy mat to carry around. But usually it's combination of wrestling mat and tumbling mat. You got to join that together to make whatever distance or length you want.

PN: How did you become interested in that particular sport?

YK: Well, I used to drop in and there were people that did some tumbling, you know. There were guys like Kazu Yoshioka was there. Louis Mendoca. They were good tumblers, good gymnasts, so I stopped by and took it up on my own. And I watch those people. And they got interested in me. So I actually learned from them--some of the moves, you know. So when the Aloha Tower was first built and the Fire Department had the, what you call, Firemen's Ball, immediately after the Aloha Tower was finished, Kazu Yoshioka and I, we gave what we call an acrobatic demonstration. So it turned out really well. Was packed with people. The floor concrete, you know. And no mats were used. No mats. So, hand-to-hand stand like that, you know. So Yoshioka was really, I would say, for a young man, was really, I would say, he had the physique and the strength and dedication to tumbling and boxing. So he and I were partners.

PN: How long did you take up gymnastics?

YK: I would say about four years. And immediately after that I got this group of kids from Kakaako and this the one that did, I would say, tumbling exhibition when the Japanese training ship used to come in. At the Japanese Consulate. So, was quite successful.

PN: So you coached gymnastics also.

YK: Yeah. So this is when I was teaching gymnastics, tumbling and boxing. So boxing also, in latter part, I would say, back in 1930 I was only 18 years old; 17, just going on to 18. I was teaching boxing already. And also tumbling. So I started when I was about 14 years old.

PN: Taking up gymnastics?

YK: Yeah.

PN: At Nuuanu "Y" did you have to become a member or pay any kind of dues?

YK: At first, I wasn't a member. But later on, there was such thing as membership, but we actually belong to--well, I was a free lancer more.

There were a lot of kids similar to me, you know. Where didn't belong to any such organization that frequents as club members. I would say, they had these Pioneer Club and Friendly Indian Clubs like that. That came on later. But, at that time, many of the kids were free lancers. They just drop in at the YMCA, use the facilities. But I'm sure that older guys, I would say, the young mens, you know, that were in the late teens or early manhood, like in the age of 20, 21, 22; they go up for membership, you know. And they are members of the YMCA. But we were younger, so when I first started over there, no. I wasn't a member. But just a free play, you know. I just pass by, drop in. But I used to do that everyday. For about four years.

PN: This is while you going intermediate school or something?

YK: Yes. Intermediate school. After intermediate school, when I was in grammar school, too. I drop by.

PN: So you walk up to Nuuanu "Y?"

YK: Yeah, not too far. It looks far but it's not. If you go diagonally, cut through--go through South Street. Cut in South Street, you go right where the Canada Dry had their what you call, plant, you know. Cut across right there, you save a hell of a lot of time. And you keep going, you hit Fort Street in no time. All you do is travel straight up. Then you get on Nuuanu "Y" on your left. So it's not too far a walk. Just takes you, oh, about 15 minutes.

PN: So that was one of your hangouts then, I guess, when you were small.

YK: No. Immediately after, I would say, I do tumbling, box a little, you know. When I say tumbling, I mean gymnastics and all that. I take a swim and I come home. So I don't stick around there, you know. Just do what I think I had to do. Just practice by myself. Many times I practice by myself. And I learn all these things, you know. I watch other people--the older guys do tumbling and this is how I picked it up. And I watch the team of Kazu Yoshioka and Louis Mendoca. They were the team. And each one balance each other, you know, on I would say, acrobatic stunts. And they were pretty good. So later on, like I said, I was with Yoshioka. Of course, I was a young boy then, so it was easier for him to lift me than to lift Louis Mendoca, who's a grown up man. (Laughs) So there's a great difference in weight. And this is why performance hand-to-hand stand was much easier for him to carry my weight rather than carrying Louis Mendoca's weight.

PN: How did you become a coach then? You know, later on.

YK: Well, because where I live in Kakaako, well, I have so many boys around, you know. So what we used to do is run athletic events. Like running, chinning the bar, you know. Make a program so that each one can compete against each other. And then, later on, the boxing team came. Yeah. From out of this group. And there were swimming, surfing--the same group.

PN: So you had a crowd of boys already following you.

YK: Right. Right.

PN: Were they younger than you or same age?

YK: Couple of them were about my age. But most of 'em, I would say, practically all of 'em, you know, were way below me. About three years, four years younger than I was.

PN: Where did you teach, you know, these Kakaako boys? Was there a gym that you used?

YK: No, no gymnasium. So, of course, there was Kawaiahao Gym, but the older boys were using that, you know. And it was, I would say, always packed with, I would say, the teenagers. The older teenagers. So what I did was secure the City and County Garage and we train at the Konpira-san later on in boxing. Then I went to Kewalo Club and then to the Japanese School. So I had 1, 2, 3--three gymnasium that I used.

PN: So you were using...

YK: During the war years--that Japanese school.

PN: No, but prior to that, when you were training this gymnastics.

YK: Right on Konpira-san yard, you know. They had a stage there for, I would say, that shibai--what they call shibai, you know. (Laughs) And that stage was just perfect. So we practice without mat on regular wooden floor. Of course, not something that has concrete underneath. It's not that solid but, you know, it gives. So, we used the actual stage for that tumbling classes. From there--from that very classes that I was holding the group that went to perform for these Japanese training vessel. I would say, well, midshipmen, you know. Guys that were training to become merchant mariners or something like that.

PN: Where did you folks hold that demonstration?

YK: That's at the Japanese Consulate.

PN: Oh, up in Nuuanu?

YK: Nuuanu. And I would say...2,000 to 3,000 spectators. That was something.

PN: Did somebody approach you and they heard about you and your group?

YK: Yes. So when they asked us to put on a show for them, so we did that. And we also did that, well, how it came about is because we held a tumbling show and part-wrestling show, you know. Wrestling and tumbling show for the community when they had their movies. You know, Japanese people they put mats on the ground and then they buy a dollar worth of a block--that's about 3-1/2 feet by 3-1/2 [feet], you know. Dollar. And then sit down and they watch movie.

PN: Oh, is this the silent movies with benshi on the side? Somebody translating?

YK: Well, they had benshi, you know, what we call, it's just like what you said. Sort of translation, you know. So what we call this narration by some guys that actually come with the film, you know. They do all the narrating.

PN: Who put on this kind of movies?

YK: The, what they call, the school and the community. And mostly, well, sometime the fishermens, you know. Their organization, they want to raise funds for certain thing, like maybe a party or whatever. Or some small fund raisers. That's when they hold these Japanese show. And during the time, intermission, this is where we come in. We would put on show for them. Live, you know, show. On the stage with the tumblers, the wrestlers, you know. But we didn't put on no boxing show.

PN: Oh, I see. So this was how you folks got to be known that there was some kind of tumbling act that, you know, could be...

YK: Well, from there---yeah, from there someone suggested that the Japanese Consulate, if this kind of a thing were exposed and brought out to the Japanese Consulate, you know, coincided with the dates when the people from Japan--the Japan training ships come in--would be just right. So they were the merchant marine type of people that the young Japanese men, you know, that were out for merchant marine. They come down. But more so on these Japanese cruisers. The Yagumo, Izumo, Iwate, and these are the Japanese battleships. When they used to come there, this is the one that when we held our show in front of audience that came to see the Japanese training ship people who are wrestling against that people from the Japanese Navy and the local...

PN: Sumo wrestlers?

YK: Sumo wrestlers, right.

PN: So these sailors would come in regularly?

YK: I would say, maybe once in 10 years they come in. Once in 10 years. And it's a big affair. So the people from the Consulate, they really go out. And this is one occasion where we really, I would say, made a hit with that people. So, the Japanese older folks were never exposed to things like that. Of course, in Japan they get terrific acrobats, you know. Would make us look really bad if they came down. But then, it wasn't widespread. So the people that were living here were exposed. And came out nice too. The pictures came out in the Japanese paper. And each one wear, what you call, undershirt, you know. And get the word in kana, you know--Kakaako, you know. That was really beautiful.

PN: So somebody gave you folks these shirts to perform in?

YK: Right, right.

PN: You didn't have any kind of team uniform then, prior to this.

YK: No. So we had good tumbling team. Wonderful team. But you see, America had really slacked down on gymnastics, you know, during those years they really slack down. Until the recent where they put so much emphasis on Olympic gymnastics. This is where America took it again. Now, they coming up. They doing pretty good now. But then actually, gymnastics is European, you know, anyway.

PN: Going back to these movies, you know, where they sell plots of, not land for you sit on (Laughs)...

YK: Right, you sit on it. It's blocked off. I think it's three feet by three feet, you know. Or 40 inches, about there. And it's blocked off. Block upon block of 'em. You put, what we call a cord, right across and that's your line. That's your line.

PN: Boundary.

YK: That's right. We say 40 inches--all 40 inches right across. And then, the other way around so that it'll become blocked, you know. So we say, for instance, this is where they have the movie. Over here would be the stage. They block it off like that. And then it's nailed to the ground so the cord will not catch on your toe. You know. So it's marked. And they were about a dollar a block.

PN: How often would this...

YK: Later, in later years, they held it at least once in three months. And so, whenever an occasion arises, or whatever fund they were trying to raise, you know.

PN: Where was this usually held?

YK: Konpira-san And sometimes it was held on that Koula Street. There was an open space over there. So it wouldn't hold too many people but most likely, I would say, the best place was that Konpira yard, you know.

PN: You say one time you folks were the intermission kind of entertainment.

YK: That's right. That's what we do.

PN: How often did you folks do that?

YK: Well, like I said, I think we went on twice, I think. Twice. And then we went to the Japanese Consulate. But between then, I would say, even without show, we do a lot of public show that was among each other.

PN: What other kind of intermission entertainment was there? You know, you said you folks performed twice. What other kind of intermission was there?

YK: Well, actually, none at all.

PN: Oh, none.

YK: Yeah. So intermission actually would be hardly any. But when we performed, you know, they make time allowed just for so we can put on our show.

PN: This was held, what, in the nighttime, I guess, two shows?

YK: Yeah. That's all evening. They called me up and they went--we were in demand, you know. They wanted....I forgot already. It's so far back. But people from Palama wanted us to put on a show over there. And Koyu Kai also asked me, that was Kaneshige. He asked me to put on a show for them. But somehow it didn't materialize.

PN: One more question about that movies like that. Did people bring food like that and cook or anything like that?

YK: No, because it's evening. They already finish their evening meal, you know. So they finish their supper and they come over. Of course, candy. You would find a lot of candies, you know. But they had, I would say, serve shave ice and so forth.

PN: So after you began teaching gymnastics, then you got into boxing?

YK: I would say, those two things were going hand-in-hand.

PN: Oh, at the same time.

YK: See, but lot of emphasis was being placed on boxing later as the boys grew couple of years older too, you know. Then we started to have a boxing team.

PN: About how many boys were you training at that time?

YK: We had about 35 to 40. But the ones that really made the team for competitive purposes were about 17.

PN: And then you had about 30, 35 boys within your gang?

YK: Right. And later on it spread. It came out. So all told, it came out bigger. If you look at it, you know, in the sense where I wouldn't call it a gang but, you know. More of an organization already. So we had over 200.

PN: Over all? All the years?

YK: Yeah.

PN: Out of these boys, how many of 'em were doing this kind of gymnastics and tumbling kind of thing?

YK: I would say about 25.

PN: Oh, you had a whole act?

YK: About 25. So, with gymnastics those days, you got a 25-man team, that's pretty good.

PN: So there was no other team around?

YK: Gymnastics like that? No. Because there were, I would say, the parents did not go out, you know. They usually homebody. I would say, the parents that were living in Kakaako, they wouldn't know anything. They know, they hear about Kalihi, but they had never entered Kalihi. Really. They don't know how--they can't find their way. So they actually were Kakaako, to the beach, or to the shore, you know. And that's about all. So exposure with other, people from other areas were, I would say, almost nil. But then, this is why Kakaako became so closely knitted. It became one huge clan. Whether the guy's Chinese, Hawaiian or Japanese--they came real close. Because they actually are Kakaako. When they say Kakaako, they really Kakaako.

PN: They hardly traveled outside of the community?

YK: Right. They don't move. They stay in there because the rental were cheap. Convenient because the town was close by. Swimming was easy, right near. So everything was so convenient. We had theatres. So no place else to go.

PN: You know, about this time, you said you were training boys to become gymnasts and boxers. Was this the time you started your YMA?

YK: Yes.

PN: Young Men's Association?

YK: So we carried the name. Actually, just for using the Kakaako Boxing Club. But immediately we changed it to Kakaako YMA, you know. When we went under Kakaako YMA, already then, that was 1936. Formerly, we entered the AAU in 1936 under the name of Kakaako YMA. Prior to that, well, we never had, I would say, gone out for competition. So we just kept it Kakaako Boxing Club. And later on, 1936, when we registered with the AAU, then we adopted the name Kakaako Young Men's Association.

PN: How did you folks go about becoming part of the AAU?

YK: Well, I attended meetings. But then, the AAU was formed in Hawaii in 1910. Hawaii is, I would say, the fifth oldest member of the National AAU body. So actually, AAU was something that synonymous to sports. So we figure if we won national competition or recognition to fight people from other areas who are also member of the AAU, then we broaden our, I would say, competition. So this is why, too. To get national recognition, you got to join the AAU.

PN: So it was just a matter of attending meetings and filling out forms?

YK: Right.

PN: Did you have to pay any kind of membership dues?

YK: 25 cents at that time. Today it's $3.50.

PN: This is per person or just per...

YK: Per head. Yeah. Membership fee. It was very, very interesting.

PN: But as a club, did you folks have any kind of membership due to pay also?

YK: No membership fee. But what we do is funerals and hospitals and things like that, each member take out, you know. For funerals, go out and collect from each member. If parents pass away, brother or so forth, you know. Then we collect from each member.

PN: Was there any kind of regulation that said you folks had to meet so many times a year?

YK: Well, actually no. Later part, from 1947 actually, we were really meeting. Once a year, you know. About 1947. That's way back. 1967. (Laughs) 1967.

PN: 'Cause I was wondering, you know, about regulations or any kind of rules that you had to follow, you know, when you become part of the AAU.

YK: Yeah, there was lot of....'course we follow that, you know. And the book was set, I think, back in 1904. Of course it had been modified and many things had been added. The rules had been streamlined in many areas, you know, in different branches of sport. So we follow that up, you know. Very easy to follow because no drastic change. There was a change maybe amendment and so forth. So we follow AAU regulation. Yeah.

PN: So prior to becoming part of AAU, you folks were called the Kakaako Boxing Club?

YK: Well, not, I would say, when we have it really organized to participate, compete, we join the AAU. Then we use the name Kakaako YMA. Prior to that, we were not competing. Just sparring. We have a club. We spar among the boys, you know, kids spar among themself. Real competition, that's when we join the AAU.

PN: Did you folks have any kind of name, you know, for that group of boys you folks had? You know, former club name or anything like that?

YK: Well, of course, we were called the Kiawe Tree bunch, you know.

(PN laughs)

YK: Because where we sat, talk story, were right underneath the kiawe tree.

PN: So that was, you know, like if you belong to the Atkinson Club.

YK: Yeah, Atkinson. But then, Atkinson was, I would say, a football team.

PN: Football.

YK: 'Cause they had baseball team, too. Softball.

PN: You were an off-shoot from that, then?

YK: Yes. Because we take Atkinson is one here like that. I belong Atkinson but still I'm the Kiawe Tree group, you know. So it was more closely knitted. Atkinson was pretty well, I would say, they the older boys, you know. My age or older. But ours is a much younger group. I was the leader of that.

PN: You weren't any kind of formal club where you folks would meet and have officers or anything like that?

YK: No. Later on. That was after we formed the Kakaako YMA, you know. So, and I organize the Kakaako Young Women's Association.

PN: Oh yeah?

YK: Formed that.

PN: What did they do?

YK: They were, well, all kinds of meeting girls. But we don't, we just got 'em started. I just got 'em started and after that--that's all. So they needed money, so in order to raise $1,200 they needed to organize and all that.

PN: Who was the head of that?

YK: The head was Betty Iwasaki and Jean Kitayama. These are girls that I got together and it formed. The first thing what they did was needed money. So I talk to Matsuo--who had the International Theatre--and the theatre was still nice yet, you know. And that's how the girls got started. But then we don't go to the girls' meeting you know. That's their affair.

PN: Oh. You just helped them get off the ground.

YK: To set it right.

PN: What was this thousand dollars for?

YK: For whatever activity they expect to put on. They had picnics too. So...

PN: They played sports or they organized leagues?

YK: No. No sports. More social.

PN: Oh.

YK: So what they did, actually, we don't know, you know. They invited us couple of times to go to the picnic. But we didn't. So I don't know whether the club has, you know, disbanded or not. But.. .

PN: So this was around, you don't know? What years was this around?

YK: Back in the late 1940's already, when I formed that club with them. So they were good organization. Yeah. So, the boys usually, we don't mingle. See. So the girls had a social club. We had, but Atkinson was, I would say, we had Tamura Store group. We're Ants Tamura's boys. Like Wally Amioka, the group, you know. We know each other very well, but we don't meet with them, you know, night after night. Usually, our group, we're there together--there singing, you know, things like that. That's the kind of the type of meeting. Casual, everyday kind of a thing, you know. Get together, guarantee they come. Soon as the sun goes down, they finish dinner, they come out. So get about 30, 40 of 'em.

PN: Under the kiawe tree?

YK: Yeah. Sometime 50 of 'em. But when we do go surfing or swimming, especially when they first start digging this place here. We used to come over here camp. Camp on the other side too. Across Kewalo Basin. Stone Wall. There's a camp over there. So that Saturday night, so we had a wonderful time. So weekends like Saturday night, Sunday---either we camp or Sunday daytime we'd go fishing right off here. And, I would say, about 50, 60, sometime more. The boys get together. And some of the boys that have other places to go, well, they don't come. The next Sunday you find them there. So we had a big group. Big group. And amazing part is, they all successful. All successful. (Laughs) They don't get into trouble, that's the part.

PN: So you were coaching for, I don't know what, since early 1930's?

YK: Yeah. Because boxing was legalized in 1929, I think. I was involved already. You know, as an individual. 1929, come 1930, more so, you know. It's a legislated sport. Donovan Flint was an attorney, then went to Congress to have boxing legalized in Hawaii. That was latter part of 1929. I were involved already. We were having boxing gloves, you know. We train among each other. Sparring and all that. Then, came 1930, 1931, 1932--we were boxing right in the back of the house, you know. And we come out, we get it together, they spar. Then, in 1936, is where we really started meeting. That's when we join the AAU.

PN: You know, as coach did you have to sponsor your boxers like that? Did you feed them and provide them with equipment?

YK: Right. So these were the hard part, you know. Where I wasn't, I would say, nor was I a good provider, you know. You weren't making too much money those days. Of course, sports equipment was very cheap. Some of the boys bought their own stuff. But then, well, I took out quite a bit to get the kids going, you know.

PN: So, that time, you were what--working already at Inter-Island?

YK: Yeah.

PN: You were working. So I'd like to know, what does it entail, in terms of expenses to train a boxer?

YK: Well, first of all, the hardest part is the location, to get a site. Nobody wants to lend their warehouse for boxing purposes where the guy will hang bags, you know. So that was the hard part. Finally got one place. Like I say, the City and County Garage help us. We need your boxing shoes, your protection cup, your trunks. And trunks, those days, was, they sewed it for me for $3.50 one. And $3.50, those days, was big money. And the cups, I furnish the cups and the jock strap. And some of the guys couldn't afford shoes so I bought shoes. The latter part, as my club grew and, I would say, became more or less well known, you know, then we go into more better equipment. And then, we have annual party after the season is over. So that cost money.

PN: So most of this money was, you know, for shoes, trunks, cups, gloves like that. Came out of your own pocket at first?

YK: Yeah, but some of the boys bought their shoes, though.

PN: About how many boys would you train a year?

YK: Seventeen. About 17.

PN: A year? You would average about that?

YK: Yeah. I mean, the ones that are competing. The ones that are not competing--see, I don't put any Tom, Dick and Harry for competitive purposes. The main thing is to keep 'em off the street, teach them how the manly art of self defense should be. You know, how the proper way of doing it. I don't know whether my way was proper or what, but.

(PN laughs)

YK: But then....

END OF SIDE TWO

Tape No. 3-31-3-78; SIDE ONE
(continued from Tape No. 3-23-3-78)

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yonoichi Kitagawa (YK)

February 31, 1978

McCoy Pavilion, Honolulu

BY: Perry Nakayama (PN)

PN: Okay, you were saying that the main idea was to keep them off the street.

YK: That's right. That's the main thing. So, counting the ones that actually never did box,and had quite a few that didn't, I would say they outnumber the ones that actually competed. The ones that competed are very few. So, most likely, if a guy's boys would be the head of a family, or eldest in the family, I don't put 'em in competition.

PN: That's about 17 you say, you would put into competition? You'd train about twice that amount during the year?

YK: Yeah, and more, more, many times more. Three about.

PN: Three times the amount? (Laughs) Shee.

YK: So actually, competing would be--some years are less, you know. So we did have a powerful, powerful team. Powerful.

PN: Over the entire career of your boxing, you know, coaching, about approximate how many champions you turn out?

YK: That's quite a few. If you count all military service championship champions--if they were here, they would win championship. But since they have to go abroad, you know, 'cause there's a war going on. And some of them even immediately after the war, they still in the service. They got to wait out their term, so when they were discharge they come back, you know. So in service, while fighting, I had several champions in the service. So it's hard to say--about over 20 anyway.

PN: Over 20 of all the youths?

YK: Yeah. And many cases, all the championship is, there are eliminations where one guy lose, is out and so forth, you know, so the two good ones left. In many cases, two of my own boys are in the finals. So, of

course, you'll guarantee have a champion and you will have a runner-up. But, still then, it's your own boy, you know. You would train both of them. So it was really a rough decision, but they belong in the same weight division, so they had to fight each other. In that case, you would find that the competition is not keen because they know each other well. They're teammates, you know. So I had many, many occasions where my own boys got to fight each other for the championship.

PN: So you trained a lot of...

YK: So we take the case like Kikuyama against Ken Matsuguma. And it's hard to--I cannot second, so I stay out of the corner. So somebody else will second the fight. Ken Matsuguma had a style, terrific style. Richard Kikuyama is a rough one. He's tough. He won the championship. Ken Matsuguma was, I would say, a fight manager's dream. In professional I would say he has the style, for he's a beautiful boxer to watch. We had like Charlie Kauhane, Yoshi Miyamura, you know. Same weight division, so I had to move one up. So I got Charlie Kauhane to fight in the bantamweight division. But for bantamweight, he's little small. Actually, a flyweight. But I cannot have on the same team two boys fighting each other, you know, the championship. So I moved one up. And that proved very fruitful because they both won the championship. Fly, bantam and the featherweight. I had the featherweight, too. Fly, bantam, feather and lightweight. So that year we captured the team championship. So everything came out right.

PN: So what was the peak years of producing champions?

YK: The biggest year? Best year. See, there were two tournaments. You know, the Golden Glove and the AAU. The best year was, I think was 1949, 1948.

PN: 1948? So during the 1940's then, it was sort of peaking?

YK: Yeah, and they were really going good. We getting champions already by then. Boyd Andrade, a heavyweight, who's been with the Police Department for many years. He came out right out of service, young boy. And fought for me. He won the heavyweight champion. And he never know that boxing so physically demanding, you know. So that what kind of a training schedule I get for them, be regiment, you know, and all that. And he really found out that it's a tough game. But he's very proud that physically he's not hurt, you know. He don't have any impairments from boxing. So physically, was so sharp, so good, he made the Police Department. He's retired now. He was really a good fighter.

PN: How many of these boys,you said you housed them, fed them?

YK: Well, you see, most of them they go home. But after the fights, some of them that are not fighters but they assist, they help me. See, you

cannot concentrate only on the fighters. No matter whether if they fighting, it's not their game, you know. They not their sport, they don't fight. But they train--some of them. Well, these are the guys that, you know, they in trouble or they don't have place to sleep, and I bring 'em in the house.

PN: About how many of 'em would you take care of?

YK: Well, one or two. But, over the number of years, it adds up, you know.

PN: Over the years, about approximate how many you took care?

YK: I would say about maybe 15 or, within 15 and 20. You get one living in your house, that's a lot of trouble already. You know, because you feeding one extra mouth. But most of them, they go home.

PN: But you had to feed them and I don't know if your wife washed their clothes and all that, right? You paid it out of your own pocket?

YK: Yeah. But very few of them now, compared to the amount of boys that used to to come my place, you know. Rarely. Over the years, I would say, maybe, two years, maybe one of 'em, you know. Or sometime in one year you get two of 'em.

PN: The reason would be that they cannot be controlled at home or something?

YK: Yeah. Most of the case are like that. So it's not because they hang around us, you know. They were problem anyway. Problem child, and they'd come to look for us. In other words, they like to be in that group.

PN: Would you pick the one you felt, you know, should come sleep with you, or was it they ask?

YK: Yeah. We can see that a guy don't go home. So, we see a guy don't go home. You know. So after a couple of months, they go back home. Straighten 'em out by then.

PN: What would your wife say about all this?

YK: Well, was hard for her but, you know, she don't complain. After the fights, from the Civic Auditorium, the boys leave, we'd go right underneath the kiawe tree. Come back over there, take all the equipment, my wife take 'em home, wash it, and she bring the sandwiches, coffee and drinks and whatever. You know.

PN: All the boys?

YK: So, we had a lot of fun.

(PN laughs)

YK: But, many of them go straight home after the fights. It's sort of special group, you know, the one that stick around. They want to talk about, I would say, the aftermath of the fights, you know. They want to talk about 'em, you know. Feed 'em. Sometime we go to the restaurant. So most likely it ends up like this.

PN: You know, some people say you were like a probation officer or a correction kind of officer. Were you trying to turn these so-called "bad eggs" around like that? You know, how did you fall into that role?

YK: Well, you see, once you start handling kids, especially in boxing, you know. The boxing group what they labeled already is special segment of people. And the boys that take up boxing also classified as bullies, you know, although they are not. Actually this how they classify 'em. So many parents, they get problem with their so-called tough kids who don't listen to the parents. So they come to me. And they figure that I handled the rough ones, so I know how to handle their rough boys. But their rough son is not half as rough as the ones some of them I had, you know. In my group.

But they all gentlemens in the end. They all really nice. So they get quality. And when they reform, they make me look good, you know. Then, the story you going to hear later about me because it's actually bloated up. That's what was a small, little favor might be bloated up. Many incidents I hear the thing come to my ear, I had to laugh because the incident and the name of the guy, the kid they talk about, I hardly did favor for 'em. There are some that I really did favor for--it doesn't come to my ear. But some that I did very little, the parents were so appreciative, you know. They talk to the neighbor, then it get bloated out of proportion. Then, sounds like I'm a hero, you know. That's the way it goes. But many of 'em weren't really problem, you know.

PN: Do you remember the first kid you took care of?

YK: Was so many of 'em.

PN: Oh. I was wondering, was it a district judge or was it a parent that approached you?

YK: Most of the case that the parents do not come to me. I watch the behavior of a child, you know. And naturally, when the sun goes down, he's supposed to go home. But he's not home. And he still stick around, you know, the outside, where the kiawe tree is, you know. So, where you expect the kid to sleep, you know.

(PN laughs)

YK: You know damn well that he's sleeping out there. You go out, he's still over there. So these kind of guys that got to straighten 'em out. And

many times the kid, they do go home. But the parents feel that you don't come home at the proper time, so that means that he's getting into mischief. They are, I would say, browbeaten. In other words, they are being accused of something that actually never happen. So, there were cases like that. Many, many cases. Just because he's from Kakaako and he hang around by the kiawe tree--he's no good, you know. So parents that do not understand also get words that these are the bad guys. But later on, when the war broke out, then they found out lot of things later on. How they missed the noises that the boys were making out at Koula Street. Underneath the kiawe tree they were playing music and all kine. They really miss 'em, when the boys went to war.

(PN laughs)

YK: Yeah. And they can't sleep because now it's too quiet.

PN: Oh, you mean play music and sing?

YK: Like before it was too noisy.

PN: Oh. (Laughs)

YK: So they really miss them during the war when the boys went off, you know. So these are the things, well, many of the parents, well, they come to me. But there were cases where the parents don't come. But we straighten 'em out anyway.

PN: You know some of these guys--did they have to report to you regularly, you know?

YK: The ones that got caught? Yeah. Every Saturday. I would say there were five of 'em, I think.

PN: Oh, only five throughout the boxing career?

YK: Yeah.

PN: What would you do, you know?

YK: Steal.

PN: Oh, they would be caught for stealing?

YK: Yeah.

PN: Oh, I see.

YK: But this is not my own group, now. This is the brothers of the guys that is in my group. They were the younger ones. And of course, they Kakaako boys but they have their own group. The smaller ones.

PN: Oh, these five were assigned to you like kind of thing?

YK: From Judge Corbett.

PN: Oh, oh. I see. So what would they do...

YK: Juvenile judge he was, you know.

PN: What would you do on Saturdays?

YK: Make them report punctual. They've got to report.

PN: What would they report? What they did during the week.

YK: Right. And the idea is rather, instead of confining them to the boys' home. For what? It's good that we give 'em all the freedom, but make sure it's got to be from 1 o'clock sharp they got to meet me. And we talk it over--what happened and how's everything. Nothing strict, you know, but, so I'm looking for punctuality. The kid, whether they swimming, then they got to take off. Quit swimming and they come and report. (Laughs)

(PN laughs)

YK: These are the kind of stuff. And we made 'em pretty uncomfortable.

PN: So how long would they be on probation?

YK: They, the one that have to play band--play for McKinley High School band. And he says, "I get a football game. McKinley playing. So I got to be in the band."

I say, "Sorry. You got to report." So that really inconvenienced the boy. So really found out that after all, you know, got to play it right.

Parents are really nice parents. They were shocked that the boy got involved with things like that. And I know one of the parent of the boy that got involved. He denied. He says, "My boy will never get into that kind mischief. He's not that type because I am too strict. So I would not permit that my son would know....and I'm sure if he got into mischief, he got involved with the wrong company." Yet, that boy was the ring leader of that group.

PN: So these five boys, how long did they stay on probation?

YK: Short while. A month. Few months. Three months.

PN: They straightened out?

YK: Yeah. They came all right.

PN: You know, that was just five. But you said there was some other "bad eggs" like that. On the verge of going wrong.

YK: Yeah. Like I say, the older group that was originally with me, these guys are really good Joes, you know. No more problem, no more stealing like that. But it's the group that don't come to my place. See, they don't come because Kakaako was such a huge area,you know. You get brothers that--older brothers that come by my place. But the younger kid brother, you know, they roam all around, you don't know what they doing. These are the ones that got into trouble. But when I look back, I surprised that these guys, you know, they really good Joes. So at the core, they not bad at all.

PN: So most of the so-called "bad eggs" were reformed through boxing or just being around?

YK: More--not only boxing but meeting with 'em, talk to 'em, disciplinary action, you know. We tell 'em that what will happen if you keep on doing things like this. How shame the parents were. Along that line. And the boxing, the ones that would be bad was corrected before they get into trouble. So everyone, the one that box were really good.

PN: Talking about all these boxers that you trained, what nationality was predominant the most?

YK: Japanese. Had all kinds, you know, but more Japanese boys. I had Boyd Andrade. Andrade is Puerto Rican I'm sure. Boyd Andrade. I had Joseph Barris. I had Moke Huihui. I had Wilson. I had David Akeo. Moses Akeo. So quite a few other nationality.

PN: But mainly was Japanese.

YK: Yeah, it was. Because convenient. The gym was right there and Kakaako predominantly Japanese anyway, so come right to the gym.

PN: You know, when you folks joined the AAU you folks came subsidized by the AAU?

YK: No. See, AAU ask for membership. AAU itself not going to support you. You only become a member of the AAU so that you can participate in national tournament. So you got to pay membership. They don't pay you anything. Latter part, they help me.

PN: In the war years?

YK: Yeah, that was participation basis because the gate was so good. You know, they help you defray your expense. You got to make a financial report, got to turn that in, how much it cost, see. Then they reimburse you for the cost of you equipment. This way would really help us.

PN: Did the reimbursements actually cover all your expenses?

YK: Yeah, more than--because you got to buy, now in those days the game is getting big and, you know, and more, I would say, drawing power. You know, pack the Civic Auditorium so the gate receipts were very high. And they were grossing terrific amount of money so they had leftovers after taking the boys to the National and leftover money in. Divide 'em, you know, fair and square. Prorated among clubs. So the clubs can get the next year's equipment.

PN: What would you do with the--you would take back the, let's see, your expenses but what would you do with the rest of the funds?

YK: You hold to buy jackets. Buy jackets. 'Cause after all, the kids fought and many of them guys cannot make the trip, right. They didn't become champion. But because they had put in the efforts for months and months of training, you got to give them something. So they had jackets and you got a party. Annual party. Just about break even. So you wind up with a bank account zero again.

(PN laughs)

YK: You got to leave enough so they can carry on the following year. But it was in the early years that was really was a strong struggle. That's when. But when it came to the 1940's already, you know, was more comfortable.

PN: Boxing really became popular? So you were like the advisor to the club, the boxing coach, and were you also treasurer and all that also?

YK: Yeah. But of course we had Tad was treasurer with me, you know. Tad Kawamura. See, the bank won't accept it under one name. 'Cause it's a club, you got to have your vice president, your chair, your secretary-treasurer and all that.

PN: With these president and vice president--how would you folks go about electing them?

YK: Hand-pick.

PN: Oh, hand-picked. Who would pick them?

YK: Me. (Laughs) Reliable, you know.

PN: You'd pick one of the youths who was boxing then?

YK: Yeah, right.

PN: You folks would conduct meetings like that?

YK: We hardly did.

PN: So it was sort of like...

YK: It's just like everyday you and I meet like this, you know. Same. So hardly call meetings.

PN: Oh, I see.

YK: 'Cause we see each other so often. Everyday we see each other. It was lot of fun though.

PN: Let me ask you little bit about what your wife thought about, you know. You folks were married in 1940?

YK: 1940. But she like boxing, you know. She like it.

PN: She knew what she was getting into before she married you? (Laughs)

YK: She knew. Because she used to go to the fights and all that.

PN: Oh. So she used to attend and all that?

YK: Yeah, she liked it. Of course, she's a football fan now, you know. So any football game, especially National Football Conference like that on TV, she know every player.

(PN laughs)

YK: The Mountain League too.

PN: Did she nurse the boxers when they got hurt or when they lost and stuff like that? You know, console them.

YK: Yeah, but later on, amazing part of 'em, you'd be surprised that as the boys get better, you know, they don't get injured. And they are season fighters, so whether they lose or win, they don't show emotion. They become season. And so they can take the bitter with the sweet really good. So no problem.

PN: How much of a role did she play in making sure that they observed curfews and diet, training like that?

YK: As far as training and discipline like that, 100 percent you got to give them. But as you know, you would know already, if you are putting on Kakaako YMA trunks, this is what we call we have a flying "K" over here on our left side. You know, to wear that trunks you got to listen. You got to be, I would say, first class in listening, taking advice, you got to be a good boy. Otherwise you won't wear that trunk. I know guys that who wanted to fight for my club and never had a chance to put 'em on because they be on hell.

PN: How much of a role did your wife play in disciplining the youths?

YK: She don't interfere.

PN: Oh, she was just mainly helping feed them and...

YK: Right, right.

(PN and YK laugh)

YK: But later on, she used to give advice to the younger men, you know, the younger ones. Past 20 already, you know, she would give advice.

PN: Let's talk politics, you know, could you tell me how you got involved with politics like that?

YK: Yeah, like I said, the guy ask me for help because they know I had a group, you know. Because not only fighters, but people that hang around. So, the politicians used to come over and say, "Mr. Kitagawa, can you help me?" You know, so people like Hebden Porteus, Johnny Asing, they used to come over. So I help 'em in Kakaako. And Kakaako is a strong Democrat district, but Hebden Porteus was a Republican. He led the ticket over here. So we gave 'em--Kakaako gave 'em full support. Full support.

PN: What were you then? What party did you belong to?

YK: I was Democrat.

PN: Democrat? Why did you choose Porteus if he was a Republican?

YK: I know. He's nice, you know. Really nice. And Kakaako was really strong Democrat. So later on, not only because of me, but we take people like Takahashi, Matsuno, Wilbur Holck's father. They actually were more hard core with politics. So they wanted kokua so I helped 'em. So they were Republicans.

PN: But it's more what, friendship? That's why you helped them?

YK: Yeah. They were Republicans. In fact, they were the ones that ask the candidates to come and see me, so I gave them time to talk it over. Introduce them to other areas. The other part of Kakaako. Naturally, we know who the proper men would be in the Ilaniwai area. On Cooke Street who would be, you know. So this is how he became even stronger. Real strong. So the candidate we carry amazingly. You take Hebden Porteus who is a Republican. He really beat the next guy. It wasn't even close. So they thought somebody was block voting, you know. That's the way it goes. It appears that way. Block voting, I know where it came from. It came from my group, you see. Not the other guys. So you block voted one guy, you know, how much the opponent would lose out. So I had never told these guys to block vote. Never. But I know, that's the method they were using. My group didn't use it.

PN: So the candidates approached you and then you went out and introduced them to other people in the community?

YK: Right. And most people, although they are voters, would say, "I don't know the person. So whoever you say, we'll vote for." You know, they say. 'Cause they don't know the guy's potential, political strength, or what role the guy would help in benefiting the voters. They not interested in that. They just went on. "Whoever you say, we vote."

(PN laughs)

YK: You know, that's the way. Because they not going to gain politically anyway. So they say, "I don't know the candidate. But if you want me to help the candidate, I vote for him." And this was generally Kakaako's attitude.

PN: So the strength of the candidate was due to door-to-door kind of...

YK: Some of them did like Hebden Porteus, he did, you know. Take him to house-to-house.

PN: What about canvassing, leafleting like that, how much?

YK: Yeah, we spent a lot of time on that. House-to-house canvass is very important. And Kakaako people they like you, you know--like Porteus is good looking. He was a young kine candidate too. He was running for House of Representatives and he really made a hit. Because he's sharp and sincere too. And the way he carry himself--he really, really wonderful. Looking back, I saw him on this gubernatorial race, you know, when he ran. Just like night and day. Of course he's an old man now, but at that time, was really just like a movie actor. (Laughs) I tell you, no female can resist him.

(PN laughs)

YK: Why not give him a vote, you know. He's good looking, soft spoken, speaks well, well educated. So he came out first. He was surprised. The Republican come first in Kakaako--that something rare.

PN: Could you describe the polling time when they put on speech and they have lot of food and I guess...

YK: Oh, those days where they put on hula shows, you know. They would go from precinct to precinct. Kakaako was one hell of a ball, we used to have.

PN: Could you describe what happened?

YK: Well, each guy would bring--well, some of them would bring okolehao, you know, and while the candidates what you call, brochure in their back pocket, you know. And they get in their right hand, they get their okolehao and they drinking, tipping the bottle. Okole maluna. They singing--they bring their own uke [ukelele]. So they really had a real ball. And one hell of a luau I would say. That's the way it looks. I would say better than a luau. And it used to pack the place.

And later on, then it came a restriction of 500 feet or so. You cannot push brochures or anything for a candidate. But those days you could, right against the voting booth. And we used to yell. The guy going there to vote and we used to yell inside. Yelling instructions. Sometime we miss a guy. The candidate who miss 'em, I handed him brochures. So what happened, we go out right next to the voting booth and we yell who and who, you know, who to cross out.

PN: Who to vote for?

YK: Yeah, and they can hear.

(PN laughs)

YK: But most of the time we catch 'em before he goes in. And these are prearranged before he go to the booth anyway. This has been done months ago. So when come to the election day, they might forget. Some of them that we, oh, we miss a guy. The guy coming in. How come we didn't go up to the house, you know, to introduce the candidate. We missed him. So now we know that we missed him. So as he comes down, we stop 'em. We hand 'em sample ballots how to mark.

(PN laughs)

YK: That's the way it used to operate.

PN: Oh yeah?

YK: So the ones that sneak behind and,you know,not sneak but they just go in and we miss them. Sometime 10 of them come all of a sudden, at one time. We miss some. This is where we go next to the booth and we yell and it's marked. "Eh, number one candidate, he's the one over there. Don't mark that one. The next one."

(PN laughs)

YK: You see. Then the guy he hears all this cause the booth is all open.

PN: Why was it like the people always describe it like it was a party atmosphere?

YK: Yeah. You see, what happened is because everybody, the candidate will say that he'll come to Pohukaina booth, you know, 19th Precinct. They would come there. We wait for 'em. We time 'em. We know they going to come there. But already in the morning, these guys are celebrating. The workers are celebrating. So I would say that the car would come. Carry candidate. And the candidate will have his own group that played ukulele and all that. Mention the name of the candidate. And we over there already, we have some workers bring riceballs. Some of them bring--what I used to do is I got riceball, chicken, all kine. And then by 12 o'clock, the campaign workers would come in with lunches. To every precinct, to the guy that helped the candidate. Well, prior to that, we already loaded already.

(PN laughs)

YK: Loaded with beer, okolehao. Was really a ball. Singing, hula dancers, and these are people actually supposed to be working at the booth. Not inside of the booth, but I would say, helping the candidate. Working for the candidate. They get loaded.

PN: So the residents would come around just to watch everybody?

YK: Some fun, really, really. This is what Hawaii, I would say, actually looks like--used to be before. But gradually it's fading. You hear a lot of this words say in Hawaiian, conversation were mostly in Hawaiian because Hawaii people are the ones that make it more gay. And, I would say, just like a luau or better than a luau. And the ladies used to come over there dance the hula. Bring their, some of them bring their poi.

But that was something. I don't think it will ever come back to that stage. Never. It's something that's hard to describe because it give so much primitive kind of effect. It's sort of something days of yore, way back, where some of them are still barefooted. They come around and dance hula with barefoot. That's the kind of attitude. That's the kind of environment, I would say, the entire Oahu was anyway. So, of course, they dress in holoku. Nice, nice the colored kine, colored print, beautiful. You get lei, fragrance of flowers. Everybody carefree. Love each other.

PN: You used to have fights too?

YK: They do but rarely. Rarely. More, everybody more happy rather than fight, you know. It was something.

PN: You said you went out and introduced people to the candidate, like Porteus. Was there a nucleus of you folks who got together and mapped out your strategy? How to take Porteus around through Kakaako like that?

YK: Right. Was really simple. Nothing I would say, no more anything like a set program. We would attack this thing first, then we'll take care this thing, then where we make mistake, we'll iron things out. No, nothing like that. All we did was take the candidate--take 'em house-to-house. And that simple it was.

PN: There wasn't somebody like in charge of Kakaako, you know, out to campaign for Porteus like that? There wasn't anybody?

YK: We did, we did.

PN: Who was in charge of all that?

YK: You take, for instance, like, well, to me, I played some role, you know, politically. I did. Takahashi, Okamura, people like that, But like

Matsuno, you know. Holck. They played their role. But it's not, no finesse those days. I would say.

PN: There was no one person like, you know, saying he was in charge of the whole Kakaako district?

YK: Well, usually the candidate will know who the guy would take 'em around. Who they would feel the most powerful person. This person would take the candidate around.

PN: Oh, so that person would know the people in certain parts of Kakaako?

YK: Yeah. That candidate would hear from outside source what person to go and see and ask for help. Who they should approach. So first thing they do is they approach you. So that's the kind of a communication. Nothing, I would say, no set standard, you know.

PN: Would you take anybody, take Porteus, let's say, to another district if you knew somebody there?

YK: We would recommend, you know, who to go and see. But usually, we take care our own, our area. 'Cause my thinking is, we shift over, you know, we will weaken. That's our thing in those days. Today you say, "Nah, nah, nah. It won't be that way." You know, pick up the phone and call this person and go make communication. Nah, we'll cover it faster. And since you are friend of the guy from the 19th District why don't you call 'em and stuff like that. Of course we did that. But not in the sense where everything is just so-so. Ours is more, I would say, out of random type, you know.

PN: More casual.

YK: Right. And anything, just pick anything. Today it got to be done. You do it today. Just like that.

PN: So did the boys within your club help you out?

YK: They do. Each guy pitch in. Really good. They drive the guy if the voters don't come out,we go over and pick 'em. Pick 'em up at the home.

(PN laughs)

PN: Oh yeah?

YK: Get them out.

PN: Did you folks get any kind of like return favor from the candidate for helping him?

YK: No, never. We never ask. We never ask 'em.

PN: They didn't give you any kine, like case beer, or something like that?

YK: Never.

PN: For helping them out?

YK: Oh, you mean beer?

PN: Yeah, I mean, you know, for helping them out they would give you like...

YK: That's prior to the election. Prior to the election. You get the group together once in a great while, you know. I been to several of 'em, but not that kine what they do today, you know. There's a campaign chairman and so forth. Our days, never. So just case of beer. Just drink a few case of beer, that's all. But no remuneration actually, where the guy get rewarded.

PN: No kickbacks. (Laughs)

YK: We never played politics that way. And amazing. If you check it out, you going to find that Kakaako guys, that's the way it was. Never ask favors, you know. Never ask favors. Not that I can recall anyway. I never approach a candidate after he got into office. "Hey, I did this for you so do this for me." Never.

PN: I thought, you know, maybe get job or something like that. You know, they help you get job.

YK: Johnny Asing helped one guy, Moses, you know. Not because of politics or what. 'Cause after the guy approach him because this guy was out of work and he needed job badly. And it's not a job that calls for high pay. The guys just want to take any kind of a job. This was years back. 'Cause I think that's the only one that I recall. Although I had helped Neal Blaisdell through most of his campaign, but I had never approach him for things. Oh, I tell you why I had to help Blaisdell too. He knew that I needed lumber to build my ring. Boxing ring. And those days, everything was frozen. Can't get material.

PN: Oh, this is during the war?

YK: Yeah. But he was at Hawaiian Pine. And he was some kind of an administrator for Hawaiian Pine. Publicity man anyway. So he got lumber for me. War years you ain't going to get no lumber. Of course they were all knotted up. You know, it's a cheap grade lumber. But we constructed the ring. Canec floor. He got the canec for me too. So it came in handy. But personally I know him already anyway. I would do anything to help the guy.

PN: So the candidates you backed was Porteus, Blaisdell and Johnny Asing?

YK: Yeah. Porteus, no. I never support Porteus, but Blaisdell. Yeah. And Johnny Asing, like I said, who wanted a job. We help. But Blaisdell, he help me with the ring. And I needed one ring badly so Tad Kawamura approached 'em. He said, "Eh, you going need lumber for ring." So he gave us the--what you call--I wouldn't say actually his scrap lumber because it was 20 foot long, you know. But it was all knotted up. A cheaper grade material.

PN: I can go back and I was looking at my notes. I wanted to ask you something. You know, we talking about gymnastics like that. People was telling me that you used gymnastics in your football like that, too. To jump over the guys. Did you ever use gymnastics, you know, while playing football?

YK: Whatever skill I gave through gym---yeah, I do that.

PN: How? Could you explain?

YK: I tie 'em over. Say for instance, I'm playing left-end and runners come this way. And dive over the interference and get the ball carrying in the back. It's risky. 'Cause one time, I hit my head. It's too rough like that. My left. I went over like that. I landed on my head. Got kind of groggy, but it worked, though.

(PN laughs)

YK: I did that many times.

PN: So you think that it helped you in sports?

YK: Yeah.

PN: Did you ever try...

YK: The movements, I would say, fluidness comes from actually gymnastics, you know. Almost same...

END OF INTERVIEW

REMEMBERING KAKA'AKO: 1910–1950

Volume I

Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

December 1978